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THE "DOMESTIC" IN LAURENCE STERNE'S TRISTRAM SHANDY

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE "DOMESTIC" IN LAURENCE STERNE'S TRISTRAM SHANDY submitted by Roberta Hedley-Smith in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

The thesis opens with a selection of contributions from twentieth century critics. It is argued that while these contributions identify much of the basic character of the work, either in terms of plot-structure, or in terms of the central presence and perceptions of the narrator, they do not fully expose the social and historical nature of that narrator's presence.

The last part of the introductory chapter proposes the "domestic" as an underlying and unifying concept in Sterne's Tristram Shandy. The domestic nature of the work is seen to rest upon three related aspects of the narrator's social endeavour. In the first place, the basic plots and settings of the past and present narratives, that make up the major part of the book, center upon a family and the workings of its households. Secondly, the narrator is consistently found to approach his autobiographical project in terms of the family consciousness, the family fortunes and the family memory. This means that the narrator adopts an essentially family-bound artistic and philosophical personality as he selects, edits and particularises the scenes from the past and present in front of the reader. Finally, the reader's relation to the narrator is that of a family friend introduced into

the immediate living-circumstances of the narrator and brought by him to follow with the closest attention the account of Tristram's family background and Tristram's present fulfilment of the family's fate.

In tune with this analysis of the domestic social presence of the narrator, Chapters II and III discuss, respectively, the historical status of the House of Shandy, and the internal nature of the family and its connecting households. In Chapter IV the narrator's relation to his family material -- to the family memory, consciousness and fortune -- is discussed along with a brief portrait of Tristram. The thesis ends in Chapter V where the nature of the intimacy between the reader and the narrator is examined.

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CHAPTER I

THE CONCEPT OF THE 'DOMESTIC' IN TRISTRAM SHANDY AND ITS RELATION TO THE CRITICS' TREATMENT OF THE "MAIN WORK"

In Chapter XXII of the first volume of Tristram

Shandy we read:

I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections and have so complicated and involved the movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine in general, has been kept a-going. . . .¹

(I, xxii, 73)

Although there are indicators within the text of what parts are to be taken as "main" and what parts are, to the narrator, "adventitious", these directions are not comprehensive.² In fact it is not possible for the directions to be comprehensive since the digressions (the "adventitious parts") are of such a sort, that even though "I fly off from what I am about . . .", nonetheless "I constantly take care to order my affairs so that my main business does not stand still in my absence. . . ."

(I, xxii, 72). In other words, the main work--the "main business"--cannot be isolated in Tristram Shandy in terms of specific passages, nor can it be readily discerned in terms of the dominant concern of different passages, since the business progresses (albeit sluggishly) even in those passages that are ostensibly digressive. To sort out the contrary motions requires that every passage

be sifted for its progressive and digressive content. But, in order to be able to do this, a notion of what is the main work is necessary. The critic is involved in a circularity. To break this it is necessary to reconstruct, as best one may, a version of the main work both from those direct indicators that exist, and from the direction and substance of the narratives as they are experienced by the reader.

James Work, in the introduction to his edition of Tristram Shandy, offers a synopsis which we may take as a starting point in a reconstruction of the main business:

And the leading overt actions of the story, developed through two overlapping sequences, are arranged within each sequence in perfectly chronological order. In the first sequence, which deals primarily with my father and his household, Tristram is begot, born, and baptized; my father attends the visitation dinner, receives his aunt Dinah's legacy, and learns of Bobby's death; he writes the Tristra-poedia, decides to engage a tutor, and puts Tristram--at the end of this sequence, in the middle of Volume VI--in breeches. The scene then changes to the bowling-green whence, in the second sequence, already begun, we follow to the end of the book the fortunes of my Uncle Toby, first in war, and then in love and finally in disillusionment.³

Leaving aside, for the moment, the claim made just before this quotation that the perfection of the chronology is "the most obvious structural device", this synopsis of the leading overt actions takes us some way in defining the main work. It is these two major narrative lines which Tristram tries to lead the reader to regard as central.

But, as was noted in the first paragraph, the fact that the digressions from the main work push forward the main business warns us that Tristram's indicators cannot make hard and fast distinctions. The "main work" is not merely the positive narrative treatment of the main events and actions in the chronological listing given by Work; but it is also the process of discovering them from different perspectives and in relation to many hobby-horses and digressive episodes. The identification of the main work must, then, be a matter of interpretation and not a matter open to simple textual verification. Novels cannot announce their "main business" as an independent datum; and, even if the declared intention of the narrator were regarded as the final word on what is "main", it would require of him that he incessantly control the reader with directions if he is to ensure that what he regards as main is so regarded by the reader.

In identifying "the leading overt actions of the story" Work, as the word "overt" suggests, has accepted, as far as it goes, the narrator's view of the matter. To obtain his synopsis he has subordinated himself to the control of Tristram. This means, for instance, that the volume concerning the travels in France, Volume VII, is described by Work as "episodic" and taken to be outside the main work.⁴ While this "episode" was included as a result of Sterne's own financial condition and his

own pursuit of health,⁵ the two questions of what is the main work and what is the structure of the book cannot be fully handled unless it is asked why this long digression, dealing with the narrator's more recent experiences, can be plausibly inserted into the work. It is not enough to point to the passage dealing with the previous family trip to Auxerre, though this, with the account of Tristram surrounded by the whole household, even on his Grand Tour, does further the "main business" as defined by Tristram. An entire section of the book cannot be justified in this way. Instead it is necessary to give up the narrator's definition of the "main work" in order to adopt a larger perspective and to rely more heavily upon the direct experience of the reader and less upon the indicators of the author. Within such a wider view the episode in France as well as many other passages may be given proper weight.

The "leading actions" which Work's synopsis fails to include centre upon the process of the writing of the book and upon Tristram's attempts to cheat death. If we regard Tristram Shandy as being the work of the author (Sterne), then to exclude these sets of actions would be to miss a central feature of his invention. For instance, without them, the themes of the father's obsession with education and the son's compensation for his impotence by writing are left truncated, and the main dénouement in

the decline of the House of Shandy is lost; for the narrator, in his actions and in his fortunes during the period of narration, is, as he is created by Sterne, heir to the family scene which forms the body of the "main business" as defined by Tristram in his authorially self-conscious moments. But even if we take Tristram as the "true" author, his actions and fortunes in the present in which he lives as he writes must be regarded as central to him. For instance, he is explicit that the reader's developing a friendship with him is a prerequisite for reading the book (I, vi, 11); he confronts his critics (IV, xiii, 288); he requires participation (IV, xiii, 286-287). From this perspective the trip to France falls into place. By the time the trip is inserted we have come to expect any significant current events to intrude upon Tristram's main comic plot; we have come to understand that the decline of the House of Shandy is a matter of the narrator's present as well as of his ill-starred origins; so that to be obliged to participate in Tristram's attempt to escape death (VII, i, 480), in his yearning for the joy and fecundity of the French country life (VII, xiii, 538), and in his flight from the morbidity and complexity of the family tale (VII, xiii, 538), is no more difficult to accept than many of the other digressions. In short, the reader cannot avoid the conclusion that actions arising from Tristram's position

and life during the period of narration are as central in the whole life and opinions of Tristram as those actions that conditioned him and his fortunes within his family, or in which he participated as a homunculus, infant or child.

Once the actions and condition of the narrator during the period of writing are added to the two sequences laid out by Work, the terms of the discussion of the plot-structure of Tristram Shandy are changed. To the perfect chronology of the two sequences is added the chronology of the narrator's life from the moment he started writing. The narrator's current identity comes to belong to the body of the work. Without this perspective Work's attempt to reveal the structure of the book remains inadequate. Not only does his narrator-based perspective disregard the chronology of the narrator's present, but it affects also Work's only other offering in his section on "structure", namely the supporting structural feature of the Lockean association of ideas.⁶

It has been pointed out by Howard Anderson that Sterne's use of associationalism is distinct from, and even satiric of, Locke's.⁷ For Locke, associationalism was an account of an irrational, even insane, condition, and was to be distinguished from a mental condition where the mind works on the strong intuition of simple ideas and deals with them according to rational laws, rather

than by tangential, sensual and mental associations. Sterne, argues Anderson, realised more fully than did Locke the living activity of the associationalist habit of mind; and he uses it both to realise humorous effects and to present his narrator's life by an oblique form of associationalist communication which is a more realistic and faithful account of how people come to understand and appreciate one another.⁸ But whatever the nature of Sterne's use of associationalism in relation to Locke, the salient point for our present purposes is that any version of associationalism cannot rightly be taken as a structural feature unless the basis of the associations--the basis of the perceptual and mental shifts and jumps--are shown. Associationalism may be a consequence, or, perhaps, a symptom, of the structure of particular mental and social states, but it is not itself that structure. The first step in relating the associations to the structure and conditions in which they arise, is the ascription of them to the mind in which they are supposed to occur. And while many instances of lateral shifts and flips are ascribed by the narrator to the minds of the other characters in his book,⁹ it is the associationalist jumps and discontinuities in Tristram's own mind that constitute the greatest use of this method in the work. This being so, the relation of associationalism to structure is predominantly mediated through the

narrator's mind, so that its significance can only be made plain once the narrator's present is accepted as a central element of the structure.

Although he does not conduct an explicit criticism of Work's treatment, Booth, in The Rhetoric of Fiction, discusses the centre and the structure of Tristram Shandy from a position similar to that reached in the paragraphs above:

Obviously to talk of eliminating commentary from the narrator's arsenal as he conducts this battle would be absurd. The battle is shown in the commentary; telling has become showing. Every comment is an action; every digression is "progressive" in a sense more profound than Tristram intends when he boasts about getting on with his story.¹⁰

Clearly the narrator's present, and his mind, his actions and his purposes within this present, must be added to the "kind of comic plot" if we are to understand the work:

Regardless of the position from which we try to apprehend such a book, the secret of its coherence, its form, seems to reside primarily in the role played by the teller, by Tristram, the dramatized narrator. He is himself in some way the central subject holding together materials which, were it not for his scatter-brained presence, would never have seemed to be separated in the first place.¹¹

Yet Booth's appreciation of the central position of the narrator is part of his general enquiry into the "Author's Voice in Fiction"; so that he is more concerned to answer the questions: "What kind of work [in a comparative sense] are we reading here?" and "Is this 'telling' [the

dramatised narrator's 'telling'] invented as rhetoric to aid in the realisation of dramatic elements?"¹² rather than to explore the qualitative nature of the narrator's central presence. Furthermore, speaking from that Jamesian perspective where "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so",¹³ Booth comments on how, in the "hopeless battle" of trying "to render, . . . the inner reality", Tristram "forces the reader . . . to take his side", even to an extent that may cause us to "over-rate Tristram's effort and miss some of the ridicule [of Tristram] that Sterne intends".¹⁴ These formal points on reader-author-narrator relations are important for identifying Sterne's technical achievement in rendering a narrator-centered reality, but they entail an unsubstantial treatment of the persona of the narrator and of the quality of his existence within the book.

In fact, the adjectives and phrases used by Booth to convey the nature of Tristram's authorial presence -- "scatterbrained",¹⁵ "valiant little figure of the eccentric",¹⁶ "inconsistent mind of one man",¹⁷ are slight to the point of evasion. This almost patronising treatment is particularly surprising in that Booth recommends the work of Alan McKillop to his reader as being

"[t]he best recent summary of the problems . . . of Tristram Shandy,"¹⁸ and yet in McKillop's work we find a treatment of the narrator and author which is at odds with charges of "scatterbrainedness", and which is at pains to explore the underlying perceptual consistencies. The question that Booth does not face is what is Sterne, with Tristram, trying to achieve that he should be judged "scatterbrained", "eccentric", and so on. If he is taken simply as another eighteenth-century narrator, then he is at least a curiosity; and by the standards of any time it is clear that Tristram has been so created as to be amusing to the reader; but in relation to his declared intentions and what may be supposed to be Sterne's autobiographical design, the epithets are, at least, unhelpful. It is, somehow, not satisfying to refer to a narrator as "scatterbrained" and "inconsistent" if that narrator declares that it is necessary for him to be inconsistent and digressive and then abides by this declaration. We have to look further to characterise the narrator's authorial presence and his enterprise or to understand the author's (Sterne's) purposes.

In contrast to Booth's "scatterbrained" and "inconsistent", McKillop uses phrases and sentences such as "flux of mind",¹⁹ "what is actually nearest at the moment, the content of consciousness",²⁰ and "the attempt to present or suggest firm order behind or

alongside the apparent chaos of the psychological flux".²¹

The narrator's world is the outcome of an attempt to "enjoy a bath in experience"²² and "to organise the material of experience and attain the fullest practicable knowledge of people and things".²³ This perspective, like Booth's, focuses upon the narrator as the central presence, but, unlike Booth, it presents him both as the free humourous artist with his "scatterbrained" manners and as the self-generating vehicle of a serious epistemological and psychological enquiry:

It is hard to say whether unity is imposed on Tristram Shandy by the function of the narrator, or discovered by the narrator in the great scheme of things. We are here confronted by the problem of knowledge: How much does the knower contribute to what is known? Sterne, as an artist and not a philosopher, is not obliged to answer this question. The narrator is coping with a great system, like Fielding's narrator, but he also enjoys what on the surface appears to be complete liberty. Theoretically he claims the right to start from anything that catches his attention and proceed in any direction.²⁴

But, McKillop's argument continues, the artistic liberty cannot be unconstrained if there is to be a unifying treatment of the problem of the knower and the known:

This right, like the convention by which the novelist may claim omniscience and take any point of view, cannot be fully exercised. No artist can use "unchartered freedom"; he must issue himself a charter, if no one else does. The basic assumption in Sterne is that immediate experience, subtle and elusive though it is, can be firmly placed in a general scheme. . . . [Tristram] is the efficient agent of the far-reaching references in time and space; he is both inside and outside the moment; he is not only the knower of English empirical philosophy, but the philosopher who writes

with confidence about that knower--a somewhat different matter.²⁵

McKillop's analysis requires, then, that we observe the narrator (and Sterne's managing hand behind him) under two aspects: the artist with complete theoretical liberty and the philosopher engaged in a sort of practical exegesis of the problems of epistemology; the entertainer is also the explorer of mind and communication. It is this perspective upon the work which begins to bring unity to it and to account for its capacity for digressive promiscuity.

These two aspects cannot, however, appear separately. At the level of immediate interpretation, the impossibility of a separation between the artistic and philosophical enterprises within any particular passage rests upon the fact that Sterne constrains himself within the limits of a single-narrator verisimilitude. As the sole narrator, Tristram is realised with a level of consistency to his character and behavior sufficient to render the reader secure in his company. Such eccentricity as the narrator displays lies in the way in which he immediately addresses the reader, hectors the reader and draws out the reader's affection. But behind the clowning and humorous ingratiation there lies an authentic figure who takes the reader only into those scenes where he is, where he has been, or which it is plausible that he should be able to recreate out of family lore, the

narration of friends or his own local researches. The narrator's self-consciousness and self-esteem, the narrator's predilection for learned wit and his delight in disconcerting the reader, may obscure the narrator's personality; yet that personality is so constructed, through the progress of the book, that it is "real", it is existentially authentic. This is, of course, essential if the enterprise is as McKillop presents it: the "knower" to be able to "know" and to be able to communicate that "knowledge" must possess, and persuade the reader of, an authentic personal existence. In short, Tristram, bearing the identity both of artist and of explorer of the living mind, must render the episodes of his private history and present in such a way that, first, they are immediately interesting and entertaining; second, his own existence within them is "plausible" (vraisemblable); and, third, that they further the exploration of the mind which wishes to recall them, enjoys them and understands them. In his appreciation of Lawrence Sterne, Jean-Jacques Mayoux captures the spirit of such a complex artistic and philosophical presence:

The humour here is, in fact, simply in the salt of the discovery of oneself in contact with the world . . . it is a mental country where fleeting humours pass like clouds and shadows, where impulses and interferences succeed one another, whose chains of ideas alternate with cross-purposes, where the accommodation of the

soul to reality is made and remade with a nimbleness particularly manifested in the fade-outs (which literature discovered long before the cinema). The constant shift from material existence--with its heaviness and density--to the momentary, the impalpable, to darting lines of thought--that is what gives to the work its extraordinary suppleness of texture.²⁶

The argument of the chapter, up to this point, may be summarised as follows: Using Tristram's own explicit directions as to what is "main", Work lays out a basic comic plot. To this is added, in quite close agreement with Booth, the over-arching presence and history of the narrator in the present. Finally, along with Anderson, Traugott and McKillop, it is argued that this presence unifies and makes sense of the whole work because the narrator, far from being scatterbrained, is in earnest in using his associationalist mind and methods, and his capacity to amuse, so as to reveal to the reader the operations of the living mind confronted by his own authentic historical and private existence. If an understanding of Tristram Shandy turns on the narrator's presence and his approach to his material, then the problem which remains is to characterize these. It is not sufficient merely to propose the narrator as the centre of his material, nor to propose associationalism as the method by which the narrator approaches that material. It is also necessary to identify Tristram both as the Shandy heir and as the writer of the

autobiography, and by so doing to give substance to the historical and private dimensions of the narrator's presence.

It is, again, Alan McKillop who points out one way of approaching the problem of identifying Tristram. After quoting from the scene between Obadiah and Walter Shandy concerning Bobby's grand tour, McKillop writes:

. . . as often in his scenes and episodes, Sterne reverses the scheme by which we get confused detail set in the simple framework of a great plan or divinely ordained scheme of things. Instead we get clarity and order in detail, confusion in the total situation. The details are ordered with the clarity and precision of a piece of choreography; the interchange between Walter and Obadiah proceeds by incremental repetition, and we come to a climax in the casting down of the compasses. But in a larger view, the calculation with map and road book is never completed. Obadiah never goes on his errand, and of course Bobby never takes the grand tour. We need hardly be reminded that Walter's plans for Tristram are thwarted at every point.²⁷

The "larger view", the view outside the circumscribed human scene of Obadiah and Walter Shandy, that view which the map of Europe, in this instance, represents, is not the focus; it is only the local that is clear and from which the autobiography can be understood. The book proceeds by means of an almost obsessive concern with accurate perception and delineation of the local condition, in which the characters and narrator strive for order and meaning against the accidents and chaos of a universe in which life is set and which conspires to upset the Shandy fortunes.

McKillop goes further in noting the importance of the local view to the narrative. He shows that Tristram brings us into the most local world of all--the world of direct gestures, malentendues and motions of affection within the immediate social circle, as well as of the details and objects by which these motions are naturally surrounded:

Initial attention centers on the physical detail or object nearest at hand, which may be absurd, homely, trivial or ignoble, and yet have great referential value.

Hence Sterne's constant attention to gestures, which he takes to be the psycho-physical crossroads of life. Here he elaborates a technique already developed by Defoe and Richardson, and at the same time reminds us, in a variation of the manner of Swift, that man is grotesquely involved with a body. Both Defoe and Richardson had gone some distance in substituting spontaneous gesture for the formal grammar of attitude, and Sterne bases his pantomime on this new realism and enhances its significance.²⁸

and:

Gestures and reactions are intimately associated with unconsidered and trivial objects, the snuffbox, the pin-cushion, the thread-paper, and it turns out that such details are not trivial after all. You can pick them up everywhere, they offer short cuts to reality and their abundance mocks the set and formal proceedings of mankind.²⁹

However, it is not McKillop's concern to explore this world of "referential value" very far. He points out the importance of the local, the minute, the seemingly trivial and apparently random in Sterne's writing, but does not go on to look for the perspective--the structure of social perception and social presentation--in which

these scenes and items are part of the building up of the main relation between the narrator and his material and of the relation between the narrator and the reader.

The analyses and descriptions offered in this thesis are intended, first, as an examination, extended beyond McKillop's, of the narrator's treatment of localities, objects, gestures, family relationships and occasions viewed from the perspective of "the domestic"; and, second, as a discussion of the impact of this domestic world upon the narrator, upon his selection of the materials he uses as his "main work" and upon his attitudes to the reader. Before proceeding with these analyses and descriptions, however, it is necessary to examine the concept of "the domestic", the concept which provides the dominant perspective by which the book is unified and the central presence of the narrator best understood.

The concept of "the domestic" underlying this thesis depends upon both a view of the social limits and properties of a home and the subjective perceptions and consciousness that constitute an individual's self-awareness within a family. For the argument is that Tristram Shandy is a domestic novel, not merely in the sense that the social limits and ingredients, the location, the characters, the objects, and the physical events, are situated within or in close contact to the

home and family, but also in the sense that the position of the narrator and reader requires a family-bound perception and interpretation which pervades the whole work in a number of forms.

In trying to understand the process of self-education that Tristram undergoes in pursuit of his own life, to understand how he sets out to learn his own identity in the process of narration, his concentration upon the local is fundamental. The clarity with which the immediate, close scene is described, and the weight which is given to gesture and homely object, are the paths of recollection selected by Tristram to introduce us to the recreation of his own life. For instance, the process of the narrator's recall is made to take off from some specific item of his past, which is as clearly and certainly known to him in relation to a reconstruction of his whole life as is the material "find" of an archeologist in relation to the reconstruction of the total historical reality into which he is inquiring. From that "find", from the pin-cushion or from the suspended action of one of his relatives, the narrator moves out in associationalist circles, so that he compiles the significance of the primary element of memory with which he started, and recreates the social world in which it existed. Not only are these primary elements of memory--the scenes, gestures and items--predominantly domestic in

themselves, in the sense that they belong to the historical domus in which he was brought up or to the homes and residences he takes us to, but also the process of associationalist discovery of their significance in Tristram's life is one which moves most freely within the social continuum of the family and one which frequently depends for its movement on association from family or domestic matter to other matters of the same sort, and which, from constant accumulation and repetition, comes to establish itself as a "domestic" mode of recreating his world.

It will be seen later that local clarity and close focus are used even in passages where Tristram is away from home. He carries this particularizing vision wherever he goes. But this mode of representing a situation is predominantly employed in relation to the home, so that it comes to be felt by the reader to belong there and to be transported by Tristram into other scenes because his vision is innately, or by conditioning, fully "domesticated."

This feature, Tristram's "domesticating", particularizing perception and method of presentation, is taken up on a number of later occasions; but though it is an essential element of the domestic nature of the work, the basic domestic structure and content of the work runs deeper than this. For the "domesticating", localizing

perception depends for its success, in taking the reader into the local experience, not merely upon a clear objective statement or listing of local objects or conditions, but also upon employing such artistry in the ordering and selection of these that the reader finds himself able to relive the memory he is offered as though it were his. Thus, in the incident with the top, the reader does not merely learn of the contents of the room, but is placed by the narrator in such a position that the scene, with all its family connotations, is re-enacted and felt anew. This artistry in creating the illusion of real presence is at the heart of the novelist's creative process and at the heart of distinctions between content and form--between objective material and subjective control. The material items--the objects, gestures and words within the scene--do not of themselves constitute the scene; the narrator's "treatment" of them--his imposition of form--is required to create the scene. The critic, whatever his philosophical misgivings about the form-content distinction, identifies the narrator as independent from his material. Tristram, indeed, has no qualms in accepting this distinction. The quotation at the head of this chapter concerning his progressive and digressive methods explicitly speaks of the narrator confronting his work. Indeed, Tristram plays every possible trick upon the reader regarding this matter, from the virtuosity of

advancing step-wise with different narrative events to the conceit of sending the reader back to find out the full meaning of a passage. From this view, the localising perception of the narrator has a double nature. It presents the local social material and it implies a self-conscious narrator who is subjectively engaged with, and is recreating, the local scene. It is not sufficient to deduce, with McKillop, that the narrator is interested in revealing the psycho-physical crossroads of life;³⁰ it is necessary to ask also what particular crossroads are revealed and what the selection implies about the narrator's consciousness. The scenes and episodes which the narrator treats in this manner predominantly turn on domestic objects and actions set within domestic relationships and concerns. It is in this sense that the narrator displays a consistently "domestic" identity at the same time as offering domestic "material".

But the matter of the narrator's domestic identity and his interest in his work can be approached more directly if we extend, as Tristram does, the distinction between the narrator and his material to embrace the whole work. The autobiography of Tristram is predominantly told using material from the family history; so the weight of the content is--in quite common-sense terms--domestic. But the family was the cradle of the narrator's capacity for perception and of his consciousness, so that

the narrator's material--the family--is also the womb of his perceptual capacities for understanding and recreating it. The narrator is the creation of that which he appears to be creating.

This peculiar property of domestic history and autobiography is clarified (and Tristram's authorial position along with it) by considering the nature and emergence of his family consciousness.

By the time that Tristram sets out to write his life and opinions he is capable of situating the family and himself within the society in objective terms, and so of conceiving the meaning of the family's dissolution or concentration and of its (and his) decline or rise in relation to the present conditions. He is capable, in other words, of describing the family in terms of its status and basic community, and of judging its performance in relation to society at large. But the process of coming to know the social world is so deeply implanted within the family, and the identity of the individual is so closely related to perceptions and understandings of his family's internal nature, that, along with his grasp of the worldly status of his home, the process of self-discovery within the family typically continues unabated. The external world stands over and against the family consciousness as an ill-defined and usually chaotic conception within which the family is a centre of relative

clarity. It is from this perspective that Tristram's localizing and particularizing perception can be regarded as innately domestic and familial.³¹

The dialectical development between the objective knowledge of the family and home as an output of society as a whole, and the subjective knowledge of the family identity and consciousness, places the family historian, or the autobiographer who recounts his life in terms of the family, in a delicate position. Each episode or scene may be known as a set of objective conditions or else as a moment of personal subjective experience. The narrator has both the persona of the detached historian and of the family member engaged in understanding his private identity. Tristram's solution to this problem is announced in the very first lines of Chapter I. In declaring his wishes about the condition of his conception he focuses both upon his present identity and upon the objective historical event to which they relate. The conception of a child is a detached historical event, but Tristram's existential declaration of the wish states that Tristram's present self sees itself as having been determined by the occasion. The effect is to distinguish the narrator's feeling and concern for his family identity at the same time as describing the objective domestic moment. The narrator is living within the scene at the same time as retelling it. Thus the process of unfolding

the life and opinions of Tristram is presented, under one aspect, as a process of relearning about the self from consideration of the family as the cradle of perceptions and, under the other aspect, as a story of family decline in which the narrator's present fortunes are read as the epilogue to the family's existence. What is presented to the reader, then, is a set of vivid memories and an interpretation of them in terms of family decline.

The problem of conveying Tristram's subjective relation to the domestic scenes, along with the material descriptions, is not handled by him on a "take it or leave it" basis. Tristram directly addresses the reader and works to bring him into the experience Tristram has of his own history. He both appeals for the reader's participation and explicitly directs the nature of that participation. The reader, far from being addressed as a political or moral audience, is taken into the narrator's presence and brought by him to regard himself as a participant in the domestic scene, the family consciousness and the tragi-comedy of family collapse.

In summary: The domestic character of Tristram Shandy rests upon four pervasive features of the work. First, the preponderance of the subject matter concerns the house, the family characters, the household, its locality, and the immediate living environment of the

narrator. Second, the narrator's subjective relation to this material is one of being pursued by the family identity and consciousness at the same time as he confronts and sets down the family story. Third, the reader is drawn into the narrator's view of his world in such a way that the reader becomes a part of that world. Finally, in close relation to the second point above, the mode of perception and presentation depends upon a local particularizing focus directly analagous to, if not derived from, the way in which an individual distinguishes the family world from the "chaos" of social reality as a whole.

The description and exploration of the domestic scene is approached as follows: In Chapters II and III the objective domestic material of which the book is largely made up is described. The historical background of the house of Shandy and a treatment of Walter Shandy's ideological view of its status are given in Chapter II. In Chapter III the basic domestic relationships of Tristram Shandy's world are examined. Both of these chapters deal with the objective domestic character of the work in that the descriptions are made with little concern for the nature of the narrator's presence or the way in which the narrator and the reader subjectively come to experience the world described. In other words, these chapters offer a view of the social background of

the house, of the domestic community and of the family relationships, as the first step in establishing the domestic nature of the work. In Chapter IV the narrator himself is described and characterised in relation to his family and the domestic material of the previous chapters. It is shown that the narrator depends upon his access to the family consciousness and memory, including, of course, his own. Finally, in Chapter V, it is demonstrated that the reader of Tristram Shandy is drawn into the subjective concerns of the narrator, is taken into and fixed within his world, by a direct personal relationship that turns both upon the importunity and friendliness of the narrator and upon his skill in sharing with the reader the formative scenes of his life.

CHAPTER II

THE STATUS OF THE HOUSE OF SHANDY

The Shandy family is a good example of that amalgam of mercantile-professional and landed interests which formed the rising class in eighteenth century England.¹ It is portrayed, however, at moments which emphasise the "leisured-gentlemanliness" aspect of that class, rather than the mercantile and professional aspects. Tristram's father, though he had supplemented his fortunes by success as a merchant, had inherited his land-titles and arms from his father. Uncle Toby, after a career in the army, had retired into much the same leisured condition as his brother. The prominent social and economic background is, therefore, that of the landed aspect of the class--the aspect which gave to those that enjoyed it the right to the term "gentry".

The eighteenth century was, to the members of this upper-middle class, a halcyon period. They substantially and increasingly controlled the administrative, constitutional, legal and economic fortunes of the country; they also provided the main audience and readership for the outburst of "bourgeois" art in the century. The economic and legal backbone of this class, whatever

its importance in commerce and the professions, was the control and ownership of land. The merchant, lawyer or soldier without access to a family estate was a hanger-on within the class and was even relegated to lower class categories.

In one of the most recent surveys of this society, Harold Perkin reiterates that it was based on property and patronage.² At the top of society were the monarchy and the nobilitas major. Below them were the nobilitas minor, the baronets, knights, squires and those merchants and professional people whose ownership of land gave them some title to be included among the minor nobility. These two levels together comprised the ruling segment of the society; they had considerable political power both in the society around the seat of national government and within the locality in which their family estates were situated. Only these, being landlords, were considered to be "both competent and disinterested enough to be entrusted with the responsibility for the general welfare."³ The gentry was distinguished from those who were industrialists, merchants, clergy, farmers, and military officers, by the fact that they were not obliged to earn a living. They had the leisure to pursue their own interests. The middle orders were, in turn, separated from the lower by the fact that they controlled the implements of their work, whether these implements were

the stock necessary to establish a trade, or the education necessary for procuring a living.⁴

Underlying this social order was the fact that England's wealth lay, as it had for centuries, in her agriculture. The country was made up of small rural units and a few mercantile metropolises of which London was the most important. Estates and country houses with their surrounding areas of cultivated land were the sources of agricultural wealth and the seats of the architects of the social order. Most villages depended on one or more estates for their prosperity and even, in some cases, their existence.⁵ The landowner controlled the leasing and distribution of land, took his servants and labourers from the village, acted as adjudicator in local disputes, was the fulcrum of local politics and stimulated the village crafts.⁶ Each member of the village, from the clergyman through the small freeholders and tenant farmers, to the paupers, had his position in a complex but recognisable hierarchical system headed by the large landlord. The landowner's control,

. . . manifested itself in the inevitability with which they [the villagers] followed his religion and politics; in the customary treats and charity for the loyal and deserving, and the harsh treatment of poor strangers, vagrants and poachers and in the continual oversight of the morals and behaviours of all of the inhabitants.⁷

Finally, the enclosed and ordered world of these local rural units was intensified by the difficulties involved

in travel--the cost of hiring or maintaining horses and carriages, the slow speeds, poor roads, inadequate inns and the danger of highwaymen.

The main dimensions of the eighteenth century landed House emerge from this background. First, there is the immediate membership of the family differentiated by nearness of kin to the present head of the family, by sex and by the family favour or disfavour for the particular members. The family coat of arms symbolised membership in the family. The landed property of the close family membership and its disposition among the members was the second major determinant of the family's standing and internal economy and order. Upon this landed-property depended not only the major part of the fortune but also the patronage and influence of the family upon the local and national levels of government and upon the local and national social economies.⁸ Given the membership of the family and its property-ownership, an establishment was required to sustain it, including house and furnishing, household staff, horses, carriages, etc.⁹ Finally, the reliability of the family fortune depended in part on its connections among higher nobility, the professions and the merchant class.¹⁰ In sum: Family, Estate, Influence (patronage) and Household were the salient dimensions of a House.

Beyond these elements there lay less essential, though typical, paraphernalia of the class: the pied a terre in London; the private tutor, followed by an education at Westminster School; the European Grand Tour for the young gentlemen; the library and antiquarian interest associated with it; the smattering of knowledge of the mechanical, artistic and philosophical achievements of the English enlightenment; the circle of landed friends;¹¹ etc. These items are to be found in Tristram Shandy , and those that are absent--for example, a focus upon the matrimonial prospects of daughters--are absent because of the age, status, or composition of the members of the family.

The four dimensions given at the end of the last paragraph but one comprise the most important material features of the eighteenth century landed family viewed from both the outside, from the perspective of other members of that society whether they are thinking of marrying into it, serving it, patronising it, or fighting it, and from the inside, from the perspective of family members themselves who had to meet certain requirements in relation to these dimensions or, in their own eyes, lose status with respect to that society. The status of the Shandy family in relation to those major dimensions appears at the outset of the work to be sound. The heir Bobby is still alive and about to be joined by a younger

brother--the family line is secure. The estate seems to be substantial and well backed. Although the listing in the marriage settlement of the types of property and rights held by the family (I, xv, 38-40) does not specify the extent or nature of these possessions, the very listing of them and the mention of the advowson to the church suggest a family of substance. The uncle of the family has inherited a small estate so that he can afford to feed his hobby horse and put Le Fever's son through school (II, v, 98); during the course of the work aunt Dinah leaves a considerable legacy (IV, xxxi, 332); a major project of land improvement on Oxmoor is not thought beyond the budget of the family (IV, xxi, 333); the eldest son is to be sent on the Grand Tour (IV, xxxi, 333); Walter Shandy has supplemented his inheritance by his activities in the Turkey trade (I, iv, 8). In short, the family's estate is secure. On the matter of the influence of the Shandy family within the locality and within the county and nation there is no direct mention. The importance of their patronage to the church and to the doctor, and their access to the houses of other gentry are slight indication of their local importance and weight. The household staff is such as to ensure complete leisure for the members of the family; at least one chambermaid, Susannah, a cook, Obadiah, Jonathan, the coachman, and a scullion run the establishment.

Tristram restricts his attention to those aspects of the four main dimensions of such a house which directly impinge upon its internal working and its private history; but it is plain that at the beginning at least the family fortunes are neither low nor declining.

It is within the family itself, as a biological heir-producing mechanism, that its downfall lies. The mishaps of Tristram's conception and youth, the death of Bobby, the impotence of uncle Toby, and finally the childless death of Tristram contribute to the final collapse. It is the most personal and also the least avoidable, the most fate-determined, set of events which undermine the family. Without an heir the whole construction and private family history come to nothing except for the autobiography of the last of the Shandys. With failure in the first main dimension of the landed family--the contrivance of a family membership--the household and the influence dwindle and the fortune is lost. The figure of Tristram writing in a deserted Shandy Hall, or haggling and bargaining over prices in France, or running out of shirts and horses, alone except for his faithful Jenny, is a fitting correlative of the family's end. It is not clear how the decline of estate and household occurred unless from sheer ^{lack} of interest and improvidence on Tristram's part; it is not even clear that the decline of fortune is real and not a creation

of Tristram's as he watches the death of the family. But imaginary or real the reduced material condition of the last of the family is in sympathy with the decline which results from the exhaustion of its members.

During the period of the two main narrative sequences the estate and house form a secure, leisured, example of an eighteenth century domus of the landed gentry. Walter Shandy, its head, retired from business, would protect the social order in which the class to which his family belongs is predominant. Not only is he concerned with producing an heir but he expresses a reactionary landed Tory ideological position which presumably affects the political and economic management of his sphere of social power. Walter Shandy's position in the social order provides an implicit confirmation of the status of the house at the same time as showing an ideological force which, along with uncle Toby's goodness and candour, will have acted upon the young Tristram. The rest of this chapter will lay out part of this defensive and reactionary position of Walter Shandy.

The difficulties and inconveniences of travel, referred to earlier as isolating factors in eighteenth century England, play an important part in defining the main localities in Tristram Shandy; for instance, in the terms of the marriage contract or in Obadiah's projected

missions the hazards and expense of any sort of travel are brought out. Walter Shandy clearly dislikes travel on similar grounds. But his objections are not rationalized in terms of inconvenience alone. Whether it is simply an excuse for a laziness in facing the hazards of travelling or whether it represents his fundamental political views, Walter puts forward a position in reaction to social change which not only would reduce travel but would affect the social order as a whole. The terms of his position are interesting since they speak to the economic and constitutional status of land which rendered the estates, their villages, and their major houses such important cells in the social order.

Walter Shandy propounds a theory of national constitutional and economic imbalance due to the dominance of London.

Was I an absolute prince . . . I would appoint able judges, at every avenue of my metropolis, who should take cognizance of every fool's business who came there;--and if, upon a fair and candid hearing, it appeared not of weight sufficient to leave his own home . . . they should all be sent back, from constable to constable, like vagrants as they were, to the place of their legal settlements. By this means I shall take care, that my metropolis totter'd not thro' its own weight;--that the head be no longer too big for the body;--that the extremes, now wasted and pin'd in, be restored to their due share of nourishment, and regain, with it, their natural strength and beauty . . . and that such weight and influence be put thereby into the hands of the Squirality of my kingdom, as should counterpoise what I perceive my Nobility are now taking from them.

(I, xviii, 46-47)

Between Tristram's father's position expressed in this passage and his own background and status, there is something contradictory; but this contradiction reflects the very real split in the internal nature of his class. On the one hand Walter Shandy is an ex-merchant, part of whose fortune depended upon the great entrepot trade of London, on the other hand he is a retired Tory landed gentleman who would deny the metropolis some of the commerce and participation of its rural hinterland. While expressing in his own life a complementarity of city and country, he indulges himself in the fantasy of dividing these worlds by a vast administrative machine (an extension of the "Tory" poor-law system) by which the rural status of the squirality and their domains would be preserved.

It is a further comment on Walter Shandy's view of the contradictory social relations in eighteenth century England, that, at the end of the quotation above, he identifies the major nobility rather than the great merchants as the interests profiting from the imbalance of the metropolis. The permeability of the English aristocracy to the mercantile magnate reflects a similar ambiguity in English upper-class structure as that revealed by the double aspect of the lives of Walter and Toby. Given a social hierarchy which less and less clearly distinguishes the mercantile from the

landed interest, Tristram's father reverts to a model of small nobility (nobilitas minor) competing with the large nobility in a manner that recalls the long struggle of the landed gentry from the middle of the fourteenth century.¹²

Finally, in a passage that immediately follows the last quotation, Walter Shandy expresses a similar view of the position of the mercantile gentry in England--this time from a constitutional perspective. He acknowledges that "in great combinations of the species" a mixed form of government may be desirable, but he regards this form of government as "very troublesome" in small combinations where the "household and paternal power" are "the admirable pattern and prototype" (I, xviii, 47). While the immediate purpose of this aside is to attack any increase in female influence in family government, the implied political position is that of an embattled--even confused--reactionary Tory gentleman placing his trust in the "natural" unit of local government (his own) and pushing behind him the paradox of commercial and professional centralism existing in his own history and in the alter ego of his class; and banishing also the requirement of "mixed government" for mediating the class interests of a part-feudal and part-capitalist society.

So Walter Shandy's approach to the condition of

the landed gentry is of a sort that emphasises its local and familial characteristics. Neither Uncle Toby, busy domesticating the wars in which he took part, nor Tristram, chronicling the fortunes of the family as part of the gentry, offer an alternative account of the relation of such a unit within the squirality of the society at large; so that, at the level of family consciousness, the social unit of the narrow semi-feudal locality and domus is uppermost.

It is against the background of retired landed family substance and within the atmosphere of moderate conservatism described in this chapter that the basic community of the Shandy household is to be seen.

CHAPTER III

TRISTRAM'S WORLD: THE COMMUNITY, CHARACTERS, AND DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE SHANDY FAMILY

. . . by which word "world" . . . I would be understood to mean . . . that circle of importance, of which kind every soul living, whether he has a shirt to his back or no, --has one surrounding him . . .
(I, xiii, 11, 35)

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentle-
man is found to be a description of that world, "that circle of importance", that has been built up (and is still being built up during the period of narration) around Tristram during his life. Tristram does not circumscribe his world, as he did that of the midwife's by a few sentences or a dot on a promised map; instead, Tristram's world is one circumscribed only by the selection he makes of his material in the autobiography. It is a selection that centres on a family and household of the sort described in the previous chapter. A starting point for describing this world can be made if one lays aside the problems of the narrator's relation to his materials and his readers and instead focuses on the description of the original family fortunes: the account of the misfortunes of Walter Shandy's second child and the accounts of uncle Toby's military affairs and his courtship of the

widow Wadman.

These two main narrative sequences are written by a dying man, a man whom ill fortune has decreed to be the last member of the Shandy family. The narrator's "main story", however, is situated in a period much earlier than this, a period when the various misfortunes and accidents of the family only threaten its collapse. The decline of the Shandy family, in this period, is neither caused by (nor reflected in) a shift in the business or political affairs, but rather by (and in) the actions of the members of the family, their servants and their friends, and the reactions of these persons to events occurring within the domestic situation. The decline of the family is as yet only a potential, and internal family matter.

It is in vain longer, said my father . . . to struggle as I have done against this most uncomfortable of human persuasions--I see it plainly, that either for my own sins, brother Toby, or the sins and follies of the Shandy family, heaven has thought fit to draw forth the heaviest of its artillery against me; and that the prosperity of my child is the point upon which the whole force of it is directed to play. . . . Unhappy Tristram! child of wrath! child of decrepitude! interruption! mistake! and discontent!

(IV, xix, 296)

This air of foreboding pervades the family mind throughout the book; but the main sequences are set in the still prosperous and relatively stable conditions discussed in the previous chapter. The geographical setting of these "main story" scenes is, except for a

short sequence in Walter Shandy's town house, Shandy Hall and the community which exists in its immediate environs: the midwife's world, Yorick's parish, Didius' dining room, the widow Wadman's cottage and arbour, uncle Toby's country house and bowling green, and the kitchen, bedroom and back parlour of Shandy Hall itself. The temporal location of these scenes falls into two main periods: that between 1718 and 1723 when the domestic misfortunes of Tristram occur and that between 1695 and 1714 when the military and love affairs of uncle Toby are being carried on.

The characters of the book move and meet within these temporal and spatial confines. Furthermore, the thoughts of the characters arise from these physical settings. The mind of each of the characters can, of course, take the narrator and reader to places outside the immediate context of the character's body. Thus uncle Toby sits before the parlour fire in a position described for us in terms of his relation to his pipe, his chair and the table; he is apparently interested in Walter's discourse--"[Toby] took his pipe out of his mouth, and shuffled his chair nearer the table, as with a desire to profit" (III, xii, 239); yet his mind has left the parlour and has "taken a short flight to the bowling-green" (III, xii, 238). The movement of the character's mind, however, is itself governed by what

Tristram calls the character's hobby horse, that is by the character's lived interests, by his mode of ordering the world, and by the actions taking place within his immediate physical surroundings. Uncle Toby's mind is forced to disengage itself from the battles taking place on his bowling green and to return to the scene before the fire, by Walter Shandy's angry movements. The mental flights which appear to take the characters out of the immediate social, temporal and spatial confines, are in fact tied, as that of Uncle Toby's is, to the main community and environment in the sequences.

The immediate Shandy family is a close-knit group of five people: the head of the family, Walter Shandy, his wife, his two sons and his retired army officer brother Toby Shandy. As the elder brother, Walter Shandy holds the title to the estate and the major portion of the Shandy property. It is on him that the immediate responsibility for the perpetuation of the family, whose history stretches back at least to the reign of Henry VIII, rests. As the second son, Toby's upbringing and education were directed towards a profession which, with his own small property and income, insured his financial independence. The brothers have, as part of their common history, a shared knowledge of past family affairs: they both know of the military exploits of Sir Roger

Shandy and Mr. Hammond Shandy and they are aware of aunt Dinah's elopement. They were raised together by the same parents in the same house and, at least for a time, they were educated at the same school. Out of these common bonds a friendship between the two has developed of such a kind that the homes of one are open to the other. Thus, when uncle Toby is wounded he moves into Walter's town house to recover:

My father at that time was just beginning business in London, and had taken a house;--and as the truest friendship and cordiality subsisted between the two brothers,--and that my uncle Toby could no where be so well nursed and taken care of as in his own house,--he assign'd him the very best apartment in it.

(I, xxv, 79)

When Toby returns to the family property in Yorkshire, the friendship continues in spite of their separate establishments. They visit the neighbourhood gentry together, they share the friendship of Yorick and they spend hours in each other's company in front of the parlour fire discussing their interests and the current family affairs.

When a family crisis occurs, the brothers are nearly always to be found together. Uncle Toby sits at the Shandy fireside during the birth of his brother's heir; he moves from the fireside to the old set-stitched chair in Walter Shandy's bedroom to wait, handkerchief in hand, for Walter's grief at the flattening of his son's

nose to subside. His unexpected interruption in the discussion concerning christening technicalities confounds the learned men gathered at Didius' home. Though he is not present at Tristram's circumcision he is, as Trim's captain, directly responsible for the event and so marches immediately to Shandy Hall to apologize to and console his brother. As Bobby's uncle he is first to learn of Bobby's death and as Walter's brother he shares the concern and grief of the head of the family. Each of these events directly involves, and becomes a part of, the common experience of the brothers.

Even the details of the brother's existences apart from each other are drawn into their common community through information gained from household gossip or emerging from their discussions. Uncle Toby's love for the widow Wadman is known to Walter a fortnight before Toby announced that he had proposed to the woman:

Susannah was informed by an express from Mrs. Bridget, of my Uncle Toby's falling in love with her mistress, fifteen days before it happened,--the contents of which express, Susannah communicated to my mother the next day . . .

I have an article of news to tell you, Mr. Shandy, quoth my mother, which will surprise you greatly.

(VI,xxxix, 472)

The frustrating nature of the intercourse between husband and wife is material for Walter Shandy's discourse with his brother. Toby understands the implications of Walter Shandy's lament, "My Tristram's misfortunes began

nine months before ever he came into the world", when Mrs. Shandy "knew no more than her backside what my father meant" (I, iii, 6-7). The hours Walter Shandy spends in his library poring over his books seeking for the correct way to have his son brought into the world, the hours spent in seeking support for his opinions from obscure writers who have developed theories on a child's conception, nose, name and circumcision and the hours spent writing a Tristrapoedia provide material for the fraternal intercourse.

The relationship between uncle Toby and Walter Shandy is the kernel of the family community--it is at the centre of the domestic scene, and the descriptions above present some of the main experiences, discourses and attitudes that they share. But the relationship between them is also disjointed and fragmented by the hobby-horsical elements in their personalities, so that the whole work, which may be seen as an attempt to bring the reader, Tristram and his family into a social community, is coloured by the digressive private enthusiasms of the two major characters. Their tendency to invade the immediate situation with their private hobbies leads to clashes and misunderstandings which only central family issues can interrupt. For instance, Walter Shandy is frequently balked in his attempt to share his

concern and knowledge with his brother by the surfacing of uncle Toby's own interests. While Walter Shandy as head of the family is concerned with the upbringing of his heir, uncle Toby, as a retired army officer is concerned with military affairs.

These identities--the one an amateur family philosopher and the other an old soldier--are the sources of their "hobby-horsical" exploits. Uncle Toby has collected as many books on military architecture as Walter has on noses (III, xxxiv, 224). While Walter attempts to mould reality to fit his opinions, Toby manages to bring the world in which he lives and the world of his ideas together by conducting the English-Flemish war on his bowling green:

My uncle Toby came down, as the reader has been informed, with plans along with him, of almost every fortified town in Italy and Flanders; so let the Duke of Marlborough, or the allies, have set down before what town they pleased, my uncle Toby was prepared for them.

His way, which was the simplest one in the world, was this; as soon as ever a town was invested . . . to take the plan of it . . . and enlarge it upon a scale to the exact size of his bowling-green; upon the surface of which . . . he transferred the lines from his paper; then taking the profile of the place, with its works, to determine the depths and slopes of the ditches . . . he set the corporal to work . . .

(VI, xxi, 443-444)

For every hour Tristram's father spends in the library, oblivious to all but the most damaging of family concerns, uncle Toby spends an hour battling against an imaginary enemy. Every day for twelve years, he amuses

himself in his hobby-horsical affairs, laying them aside only for dinner or when news of the war fails to reach him:

. . . regulating their approaches and attacks, by the accounts my uncle Toby received from the daily papers, --they went on, during the whole siege, step by step with the allies.

. . . In this track of happiness for many years, without one interruption to it, except now and then when the wind continued to blow due west for a week or ten days together, which detained the Flanders mail . . . did my uncle Toby and Trim move . . .

(VI, xxii, 445-446)

To uncle Toby, the battlefield he has created is the battlefield in Flanders:

Then retire into the citadel, and blow it up into the air; and having done that, corporal, we'll embark for England.--We are there, quoth the corporal, recollecting himself--Very true, said my uncle Toby--looking at the church.

(VI, xxxv, 465)

This world of battles is extended into his whole life and way of thinking. So the miniature battlefield on which uncle Toby re-enacts the military campaigns between the English and the Flemish is not limited to the rood and a half of ground surrounded by the tall yew hedge on one side and the rough holly thicket and flowering shrubs on the other three. The battlefield is first extended into the kitchen garden:

My uncle Toby took the liberty of encroaching upon his kitchen garden, for the sake of enlarging his works on the bowling green, and for that reason generally ran his first and second parallels betwixt two rows of his cabbages and his collyflowers.

(VI, xxi, 444)

Although the actual fortifications are limited to Toby's property, the roads, walks and gardens of the community are, in his imagination, military routes through hostile or friendly territory. For instance the group on their way to Didius' house proceed down the road as if it were part of the route to war:

Corporal Trim and Obadiah, upon two coach-horses a-breast, led the way as slow as a patrol--whilst my uncle Toby, in his laced regimentals and tye-wig, kept his rank with my father, in deep roads and dissertations alternately upon the advantage of learning and arms, as each would get the start.

(IV, xxv, 315)

Again, the motley crew responsible for Tristram's circum-cision march slowly, with their captain at their head, from Toby's house to Walter Shandy's:

Then Yorick, replied my uncle Toby, you and I will lead the way abreast,--and do you, corporal, follow a few paces behind us.--And Susannah, an' please your honour, said Trim, shall be put in the rear.--'Twas an excellent disposition,--and in this order, without either drums beating, or colours flying, they marched slowly from my uncle Toby's house to Shandy-hall.

(V, xxiii, 381)

Rooms become areas of doubtful safety when Trim and Toby enter them. Inappropriate though the parlour is with its limited capacity, its two chairs placed in front of the fireplace, its desk, and Walter's books and his notes and his wife's sewing equipment lying in odd places, it is nevertheless transformed into a battle scene:

There is no way but to march coolly up to them, --receive their fire, and fall in upon them, pell-mell --Ding dong, added Trim --Horse and foot, said my uncle Toby --Helter skelter, said Trim --Right and left, cried my uncle Toby --Blood an' ounds, shouted the corporal; --the battle raged, --Yorick drew his chair a little to one side for safety. . . .

(V, xxi, 380-381)

The gutters of the church, the spouts taking the water from Uncle Toby's eaves, Toby's pewter shaving basin and the weights and pullies from the sash windows of both Toby and Walter's houses become ten new battering cannons and three demi-culverins for uncle Toby's bowling green (V, xix, 377-378). Trim's own Turkish tobacco pipes transform uncle Toby's six field pieces into incessantly firing machinery (VI, xxv, 452).

The affair between the widow Wadman and uncle Toby is a skirmish between two opposing sides. The widow Wadman's eye, "an eye . . . for all the world exactly like a cannon" (VIII, xxiv, 577) enables her to bring down uncle Toby:

"I am in love, corporal!" quoth my uncle Toby . . . [Widow Wadman] has left a ball here--added my uncle Toby--pointing to his breast. . . .

(VIII, xxvii-xxviii, 580-581)

A counter attack is proposed:

But your honour's two razors shall be new set--and I will get my Montero cap furbish'd up, and put on poor lieutenant Le Fever's regimental coat, which your honour gave me to wear for his sake--and as soon as your honour is clean shaved--and has got your clean shirt on, with your blue and gold . . . and everything is ready for the attack--we'll march up boldly, as if 'twas to the face of a bastion; and whilst your honour engages Mrs Wadman

in the parlour, to the right--I'll attack Mrs Bridget in the kitchen, to the left; and having seiz'd that pass, I'll answer for it, said the corporal, snapping his fingers over his head--that the day is our own.

(VIII, xxx, 583)

Uncle Toby dressed in a mouldy and very tight uniform advances, at the head of his company, down the avenue which runs between his house and Mrs Wadman's, to carry out his plan:

My uncle Toby faced about, and march'd firmly as at the head of his company--and the faithful corporal; shoulder-ing his stick, and striking his hand upon his coat-skirt as he took his first step--march'd close behind him down the avenue.

(IX, viii, 610)

As Toby's world is not confined to his bowling green, neither is Tristram's father's to his study.

Tristram observes:

[My father's] road lay so very far on one side, from that wherein most men travelled,--that every object before him presented a face and section of itself to his eye, altogether different from the plan and elevation of it seen by the rest of mankind.--In other words, 'Twas a different object,--and in course was differently considered

(V, xxiv, 382)

The daily affairs of the family are constantly being subjected to the theoretical outpourings of such authorities as Rubenius, Solon, Prignitz, Paraeus, and Slawkenbergius, whose manuscripts are a feature of Walter's study and parlour. Or events within the family are used as illustrations of the correctness of Walter's philosophy. As Mrs Shandy's time draws near Walter investigates the

location of his coming child's soul.

Now, as it was plain to my father, that all souls were by nature equal,--and that the great difference between the most acute and the most obtuse understanding . . . arose merely from the lucky or unlucky organization of the body, in that part where the soul principally took up her residence,--he had made it the subject of his enquiry to find out the identical place.

(II, xix, 147)

These investigations prompt him to attempt to persuade Mrs Shandy to have a caesarian but "seeing her turn as pale as ashes at the very mention of it, as much as the operation flattered his hopes,--he thought it as well to say no more of it . . ." (II, xix, 153). The corollary of Tristram's father's conclusions about noses, "that the length and goodness of the nose was owing simply to the softness and flaccidity of the nurse's breast" (III, xxxviii, 234), throws the Shandy household into an uproar:

. . . besides the systems of Prignitz and Scroderus, which Ambrose Paraeus his hypothesis effectively overthrew,--it overthrew at the same time the system of peace and harmony of our family; and for three days together, not only embroiled matters between my father and my mother, but turn'd likewise the whole house and every thing in it, except my uncle Toby, quite upside down.

(III, xxxviii, 234-235)

The treatise on the education and upbringing of his heir which Walter constructs on the basis of his own and his author's opinions engrosses him so completely that he becomes oblivious to the needs of his flesh and blood son:

The first thing which entered my father's head . . . was to sit down coolly . . . and write a TRISTA-poedia, or system of education for me . . . so as to form an INSTITUTE for the government of my childhood and adolescence. I was my father's last stake-- he had lost my brother Bobby entirely,-- he had lost, by his own computation full three fourths of me-- that is, he had been unfortunate in his three first great casts for me-- my geniture, nose, and name. . . . he was three years and something more, indefatigably at work, and at last, had scarce compleated, by his own reckoning, one half of his undertaking: the misfortune was, that I was all that time totally neglected and abandoned to my mother; and what was almost as bad, by the very delay, the first part of the work, upon which my father had spent the most of his pains, was rendered entirely useless,-- every day a page or two became of no consequence.

(V, xvi, 372,375)

Even in the matter of providing a fastening for Tristram's breeches Walter consults, among others, Albertus Rubernius, Bayfius, Budoeus:

. . . the great Bayfius . . . honestly said, he knew not what it was, --whether a tibula,-- a stud,-- a button, -- a loop,-- a buckle,-- or clasps and keepers.-----

--My father lost the horse, but not the saddle----- They are hooks and eyes, said my father-- and with hooks and eyes he ordered my breeches to be made.

(VI, xix, 442)

Walter Shandy views uncle Toby's love affair in the light of the philosophical problem of love:

That provision should be made for continuing the race of so great, so exalted and godlike a Being as man-- I am far from denying--but philosophy speaks freely of every thing; and therefore I still think and do maintain it to be a pity, that it should be done by means of a passion which bends down the faculties, and turns all the wisdom, contemplations, and operations of the soul backwards. . . .

(IX, xxxiii, 644-645)

Walter's grief at Bobby's death is assuaged by the set of

fine sayings on the matter provided by philosophy:

My father managed his affliction . . . differently from most men either ancient or modern; for he neither wept it away . . . nor slept it off . . . or hang'd it . . . or drowned it . . . nor did he curse it, or damn it, or excommunicate it, or rhyme it, or lillabullero it.-----

He got rid of it, however [through philosophy].

(V, iii, 351-353)

It is plain from these instances of the behaviors of the brothers, whose relationship stands as the nexus of the family community, that their hobby horses bear directly upon their relationship with each other and their relationships with the rest of the community. Toby's consistent treatment of reality in terms of war and Walter's search for philosophical meaning and learned precedents even in trivial domestic events, are important in their own right in revealing the private characters of Toby and Walter; but their impact on the nature and order of the community and so upon Tristram's formation are their main significance for the narrative.

For example, discussion between the two brothers given their different views of the world and the interests they have in their hobby horses, is an immensely hazardous affair. They are continually at cross-purposes:

'Tis a pity, cried my father one winter's night, after three hours painful translation of Slawkenbergius,-- 'tis a pity, cried my father, putting my mother's thread-paper into the book for a mark, as he spoke,-- that truth, brother Toby, should shut herself up in such impregnable fastnesses and be so obstinate as not to

surrender herself sometimes up upon the closest siege.

Now it happened then, as indeed it had often done before, that my uncle Toby's fancy, during the time of my father's explanation of Prignitz to him,-- having nothing to stay it there, had taken a short flight to the bowling green. . . . But the word siege, like a talismanic power . . . wafting back my uncle Toby's fancy . . . he opened his ears. . . .

'Tis a pity, said my father, that truth can only be on one side, brother Toby.-- considering what ingenuity these learned men have all shown in their solutions of noses.-- Can noses be dissolved? replied my uncle Toby.

(III, xli, 238-239)

Prignitz's theory on noses changes its shape during the discussion. It is used by Walter Shandy to launch into a rhetorical discussion on truth. It becomes interesting to uncle Toby, only when it touches military affairs. Such misunderstandings are continually being generated by the brothers' conversations together, misunderstandings emerging characteristically from the one's philosophical and the other's military interests. The brothers protect themselves from each other in relation to their themes. Tristram's father tries to remove dangerous words like "siege" from his discussions; uncle Toby's mind escapes by means of short flights to the bowling green if the discussion becomes too complex. In the last instance he can always revert to the Argumentum Fistolarum and obliterate Walter's voice by whistling Lillabullero.

However, the concern which they share for the family and their own relationship can break into, and in critical situations does break into, the world of

individual hobby horses and so unite the brothers. Anger, hurt or sorrow are dispelled by gestures or expressions, which serve, as words do not, to recall the genuine friendship between them. When, for instance, uncle Toby's hobby horse is insulted and Toby is in danger of becoming less open because of Walter Shandy's ridicule, reparations are made:

. . . as soon as my father had done insulting his HOBBY-HORSE,--- he turned his head, without the least emotion, from Dr. Slop, to whom he was addressing his discourse, and look'd up into my father's face, with a countenance spread over with so much good nature;---so placid; -- so fraternal; -- so inexpressibly tender towards him;--- it penetrated my father to his heart: He rose up hastily from his chair, and seizing hold of both my uncle Toby's hands as he spoke:-- Brother Toby, said he,--- I beg thy pardon. . . .

(II, xii, 115)

When uncle Toby, defending his hobby horse with his pipe, causes his brother to cough, Toby moves to his assistance:

My uncle Toby would never attempt any defence against the force of this ridicule, but that of redoubling the vehemence of smoaking his pipe; in doing which, he raised so dense a vapour one night after supper, that it set my father . . . into a suffocating fit of coughing: my uncle Toby leap'd up without feeling the pain upon his groin,-- and, with infinite pity, stood beside his brother's chair, tapping his back with one hand, and holding his head with the other, and from time to time, wiping his eyes with a clean cambrick handkerchief, which he pull'd out of his pocket.--- The affectionate and endearing manner in which my uncle Toby did these little offices, -- cut my father thro' his reins, for the pain he had just been giving him.

(III, xxiv, 211-212)

The ambiguity which accompanies many of their actions—for instance, the ambiguity of my uncle Toby's taking his pipe from his mouth and staring at it—is swept away. (A

great reasoner, Tristram claims, would have wrongly concluded from this action that "my uncle Toby . . . was syllogizing and measuring with it the truth of each hypothesis of long noses, in order as my father laid them before him" (238)). Instead, in the first example above, Toby smiles at Walter, Walter signifies the importance of this by moving towards uncle Toby. By one means or another, the direct relationship is restored.

The relation between the brothers is the heart of the family as revealed by Tristram. None of the other characters hold such a continuous dialogue nor are they endowed with hobby-horses by which dialogue is both fragmented and furthered. Of the other members of the direct family only Mrs. Shandy has any substance. Of Walter's children we know little and that little emerges from the position they occupy in the family activities and conversation. Bobby emerges from the narrative as the distant "problem" heir who dies before he can be sent on his Grand Tour. Tristram appears almost always, simply as an object of his family's concern: that is at the moments when he is being conceived, born, christened, breeched or taken on the Grand Tour.

Mrs. Shandy, though she occupies a relatively minor position in the narrative, appears at crucial junctures in the family's fortunes and holds sway over the domestic management of the house. It is her bland

responses that repeatedly frustrate her husband's attempts to interest her in his opinions. Her interest in household trivia leads her to interrupt the performance of one of Walter Shandy's duties with the untimely question "Pray, my dear . . . have you not forgot to wind up the clock?" (I, i, 5). She is the mother who argues simply but stubbornly for her woman's prerogative in the matter of Tristram's delivery and in doing so thwarts another of Walter's plans for his heir:

. . . my father was for having the man-midwife by all means. My father begg'd and intreated, she would for once recede from her prerogative in this matter, and suffer him to choose for her;--My mother . . . insisted upon her privilege in this matter, to choose for herself,--and have no mortal's help but the old woman's--What could my father do? He was almost at his wit's end;--talked it over with her in all moods;--placed his arguments in all lights;--argued the matter with her like a christian,--like a heathen,--like a husband,--like a father,--like a patriot,--like a man:--My mother answered every thing only like a woman; which was a little hard upon her

(I, xvii, 48)

It is ironic that this woman whose interests lie in the immediate management of household affairs and whose confidants are the servants of Shandy Hall and the females of the surrounding district is left to raise the future heir of Shandy Hall during the period that her husband writes his Tristrapoedia. In general Mrs. Shandy appears in the book as a hazard in relation to the way that Walter Shandy would order his home. Their marriage settlement contains a protection of Mrs. Shandy against

her husband's refusal to go to London and a protection of Walter against this exaction being misused. On this turns the first of the misfortunes of Tristram. Although Mrs. Shandy was entrusted with the upbringing of her son for the period of the writing of the Tristrapoedia and may be supposed to have featured in other periods of his raising, her influence as mother seems to have been as slight as was her impact upon the hobby-horses of Walter Shandy. It is a house where the maternal influence is quite overshadowed by the hobby-horsical conversations and the personal closeness of the father and uncle.

Toby's home is run as if it were his military quarters. Corporal Trim, Toby's manservant, regards his duties as the duties of an enlisted man to a superior officer. Captain Toby and Corporal Trim had been in battle together and have had to retire because of the wounds they had incurred while fighting:

I must here inform you, that this servant of my uncle Toby's, who went by the name of Trim, had been a Corporal in my uncle's own company. . . .

The poor fellow had been disabled for the service, by a wound in his left knee by a musket-bullet, at the battle of Landen, which was two years before the affair of Namur;-- and as the fellow was well-loved in the regiment, and a handy fellow into the bargain, my uncle Toby took him for his servant, and of excellent use was he, attending my uncle Toby in the camp and in his quarters as valet, groom, barber, cook, sempster, and nurse; and indeed, from first to last, waited upon him and served him with great fidelity and affection.

(II, v, 94)

The military relationship, the corporal loving and obeying

his master and the captain loving and relying on the corporal, continues when both old soldiers retire. And, although Corporal Trim is not hobby-horsical himself, he fights beside uncle Toby on the bowling green. The similarity of their knowledge makes him an ideal companion:

Trim . . . by four years occasional attention to his Master's discourse upon fortified towns, and the advantage of prying and peeping continually into his Master's plans, etc. exclusive and besides what he gained HOBBY-HORSICALLY, as a bodyservant . . . was thought, by the cook and chambermaid, to know as much of the nature of strong-holds as my uncle Toby himself.

(II, v, 95)

His friendship with uncle Toby, his respectful carriage, his knowledge of military affairs, and his occasional dramatic readings, warrant Trim's presence in the parlour, and participation in the discussions going on there. In the Shandy kitchen he is respected by Obadiah and Jonathan and courted by SuSannah and the cook.

None of these, Walter's servants, receive the direct family confidence or freedom that Trim enjoys in the business going on in the parlour. Instead the house is clearly divided between servants and family. Obadiah, as Walter Shandy's man-servant and estate manager, is remarkable for his ineptitude and he thwarts some of Walter's plans by the mismanagement of the duties allotted to him: the knots he ties in Doctor Slop's bag result in the loss of Tristram's nose, and the mating he

allows between a donkey and mare result in the loss of Walter's Arabian foal. Obadiah is not however, consulted about the affairs of his master. His awareness of family matters stems from his own participation in them, from Trim's or Susannah's reports, or from overhearing conversations through the open parlour door. Susannah, Mrs. Shandy's chamber-maid, gains her stature in kitchen affairs through her mistress, who discusses family gossip with her, and through her relationship with Trim. Like Obadiah, she can, in the normal course of her duties to the family, be the proximate cause of disasters within the household. The only other servant whose position warrants him some respect in the kitchen is Jonathan, the coachman. Though he is allowed little opportunity for observing the family at home, he, by forgetting to trace out the bar sinister on the arms of the family coach, obstructs Walter Shandy's designs directly.

That the various ineptitudes of the servants, especially the two directly privy to the affairs of their master and mistress, lead to no serious recriminations is a reflection on both the family itself and its individual members. Susannah is kept by the family because, presumably, her interests coincide with Mrs. Shandy's. Trim's freedom within Shandy Hall is protected both because he is uncle Toby's friend and because Walter Shandy is interested in observing the techniques of a man who,

though this fact is never articulated by Tristram's father, is another rhetorician:

A curious observer of nature . . . would have given the half of it, to have heard Corporal Trim and my father, two orators so contrasted by nature and education, haranguing over the same bier.

My father a man of deep reading--prompt memory-- with Cato, and Seneca, and Epictetus, at his fingers ends.--

The corporal--with nothing--to remember--of no deeper reading than his muster-roll--or greater names at his finger's end, than the contents of it.

The one proceeding from period to period, by metaphor and allusion, and striking the fancy as he went along . . . with the entertainment and pleasantries of his pictures and images.

The other, without wit or antithesis, or point, or turn, this way or that; but leaving the images on one side, and the pictures on the other, going strait forwards as nature could lead him, to the heart.

(V, vii, 359)

The servants' relation with the family is, in general, friendly, respectful and plausibly inefficient and their relation to the narrative is--despite their important roles in assisting at the mishaps of the family--fittingly subordinate.

There are, outside of this circle of immediate family and servants, a number of other characters whose states or function bring them into contact with the Shandys. The first of these is the village parson, Yorick, who exists as a semi-dependent member of the household. He has status and learning enough to be admitted as critic to Walter's discussions; and is an important foil to them and to Walter's hobby horse. As the vicar, he is dependent on the family for his

living and so curries favour in this household and households like it. He is thus privy to the domestic arrangements within the household. Dr. Slop is attached to the house less directly. His practice probably depends in part upon the patronage of the Shandy family, but his independence would be greater than parson Yorick's. His position within the household is largely contingent on its need and on his own knowledge of obstetrical matters. His is therefore an occasional relationship so that he is ignorant of the family and its hobby horses. The poor man finds, for example, that Walter will defend Toby's hobby horse in true family spirit after he (Slop) has failed to appreciate it. Though his learning admits him into the parlour, the exercising of Mrs. Shandy's prerogative in the matter of child-bearing sets him beneath Mrs. Shandy's woman mid-wife, so that he becomes essentially an external foil to the brother's conversations.

The men who gather round Didius' dinner table are the equals of Walter Shandy in both learning and status. But since they are not privy to the domestic arrangements of the household, their role is restricted to this one occasion when the family, in need of advice, invades them.¹

The other establishment which has direct links with Shandy Hall is the cottage of Mrs. Wadman. She is probably a tenant of either Walter or Toby Shandy; and

her cottage and garden lie beside and parallel to uncle Toby's property. From her arbour she can easily observe uncle Toby's movements on his bowling green; and her maid, Bridget, is a comrade of Susannah's. Due to this latter relationship, gossip concerning the one family travels from house to house with great facility.

In a manner analogous to Tristram's own localising and domesticating visions, the widow Wadman's mind comes to include uncle Toby as part of her household inventory through association of person to thing:

[in her own house], for her soul, she can see him in no light without mixing something of her own goods and chattels along with him--till by reiterated acts of such combinations, he gets foisted into her inventory. . . .

(VIII, viii, 546)

But the love affair, carried on by uncle Toby as if it were a military skirmish and by the widow Wadman as if it were a sensual one, is never consummated, either by the church or by the lovers, because of Toby's wound. The story finally reverts to the predicament of the Shandy family. The bull is impotent.

This basic community of the House of Shandy takes over, either through actions or digressions of members of that community, most of the work. It provides the predominant domestic material of the work along with the basic location and environment of objects and places which the remainder of this chapter fills out.

The houses of the community are described in terms of their relation to Shandy Hall. The distance from Walter Shandy's to Didius' house can be travelled in a few hours, the distance from Dr. Slop's cottage to the Shandy parlour is eight miles and the distance from both Yorick's and the mid-wife's house to the estate is under four miles. The homes of the central characters, the Shandy brothers and the widow Wadman, are located within the same village.

Uncle Toby's estate, the small country house with the kitchen garden of half an acre behind it and the bowling green located at the bottom of the garden, was once a part of the large Shandy estate. Thus it is probable that the brothers live on adjacent lands. On the other side of Toby's property and parallel to it are the house and gardens of widow Wadman. The two properties are separated by a hedge which hides Mrs. Wadman's arbour. A wicker gate built into the hedge-row allows her, when she tires of merely observing Toby, to approach to the very door of his sentinal box.

A lane connects Shandy Hall to the avenue which passes by the house and cottage of Captain Shandy and Mrs. Wadman. It is in this dirty, twisted lane that Dr. Slop meets Obadiah:

[Dr Slop] had approach'd to within sixty yards of . . .
[Shandy Hall], and within five yards of a sudden turn,

made by an acute angle of the garden wall,--and in the dirtiest part of a dirty lane,--when Obadiah and his coach-horse turn'd the corner, rapid, furious,--pop,--full upon him!

(II, ix, 105)

Walter Shandy's property stretches across a river and takes in the working farm land and a "fine, large, whinny, undrained, unimproved common" (IV, xxxi, 333). It contains a water mill in full view of the house, the stables and Shandy Hall itself.

It is probable, since the family annals trace the Shandy family back to the period of Henry VIII, that the original Shandy Hall was built in the Tudor style, with low ceilings and small windows, though additions to the original Hall would have been made. Shandy Hall consists of at least two floors: the upper one containing the master bedroom, Mrs. Shandy's lying-in room and Tristram's own room; and the lower floor, a dining-room, a study, a back parlour and a hall leading off to the kitchen. A bannistered staircase wide enough to hold two people joins the two floors. The main occasions, except for the incident with uncle Toby and the fly in the dining-room, are restricted to those rooms in which most of the family living was conducted.

The bedroom, the parlour and the study are furnished with household objects which, in the process of the narrative, the reader comes to know intimately. The master bedroom holds a curtained and quilted bed at the

head of which is an old "set-stitch'd chair balanced and fringed around with party-colour'd worsted bobs" (III, xxix, 216). At the foot of the bed and only partly beneath it is the chamber pot.

Immediately inside the back entrance is the parlour whose focal point is the fireplace, on either side of which is a chair. In front of one of these chairs is the low stool on which uncle Toby rests his feet. Toward the back of the room, behind a table, is the cushion where Mrs. Shandy sits with her sewing basket beside her. Above the fireplace, on the mantle, are the manuscripts and books Walter Shandy is using. A door with a broken hinge connects the parlour and the hall. Further down the passage is the father's, later the son's, study furnished with a desk which faces the fireplace, a small stool, a large bookcase containing works on philosophical and military affairs, and a cupboard or drawer which holds Walter's manuscripts and the family record sheets.

Besides the things which, until they are removed to the bowling green by Trim, belong in the rooms described, there are a number of other objects which appear in the narrative: Tristram's father's spectacles, his pipe, his breeches, his nightshirt, his coat, his compasses, his money, his books, his pen and his paper; uncle Toby's pipe, his cambrick handkerchief, his uniforms,

his cane, his shirt, his shoes, his maps, the household odds and ends which are melted into war machinery, his bridge, his sentinel box; Trim's cap, his hat, his stick, his pipes and his uniforms; Mrs. Shandy's green dress, her thread-paper, her pin cushion and the clock; Doctor Slop's obstetrical instruments; Yorick's sermons; and outside the house, the stock and equipage looked after by Jonathan and Obadiah: the impotent bull, the Arabian horse, the two coach horses and the coach bearing the family crest.

The physical domestic arrangements listed above enter directly into the episodes of the work, and constrain the characters. For instance, it is because of the long passageway between his own and Mrs. Shandy's rooms that my father's plans for naming Tristram are thwarted; it is because of the limited acreage of uncle Toby's bowling green that his fortifications have to encroach upon his kitchen garden and he has to run "his first and second parallels betwixt two rows of his cabbages and collyflowers" (VI, xxi, 444). It is not only the spatial arrangements of gardens and rooms which impinge on the history; the simplest domestic objects impinge also. Walter Shandy's plans for his son are thwarted by the existence of clocks wound every first Sunday of the month, by forceps tied too tightly into a medical bag, and by breeches "fastened with a single

button, and that button through haste thrust only half through the button hole" (IV, xiv, 288). His philosophical thoughts are interrupted by a squeaking hinge:

Never did the parlour-door open--but his philosophy or his principles fell a victim to it;--three drops of oyl with a feather, and a smart stroke of a hammer had saved his honour for ever.

(III, xxi, 203)

His search for truth is interrupted by a word which cannot be scratched into making sense.

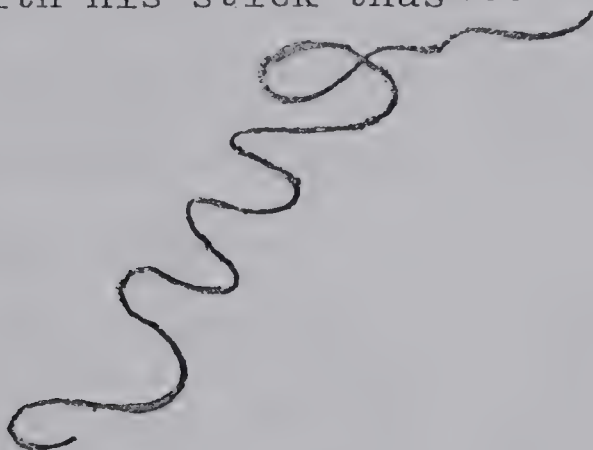
But while objects continually frustrate Walter Shandy's ideas, they also impinge upon, and usually clarify, uncle Toby's. Toby leaves the world of verbal explanations, and of military dictionaries, and constructs a "real" battlefield with real machinery. A turning point in Toby's career is even determined by the size of a table.

The table in my uncle Toby's room, and at which, the night before this change [the decision to leave his sick-bed and go to the country] happened, he was sitting with his maps, etc. about him,--being somewhat of the smallest, for that infinity of great and small instruments of knowledge which usually lay crouded upon it;--he had the accident, in reaching over for his tobacco-box, to throw down his compasses, and in stooping to take the compasses up, with his sleeve he threw down his case of instruments, and snuffers;--and as the dice took a run against him, in his endeavouring to catch the snuffers in falling,--he thrust Monsieur Blondel off the table and Count de Pagun o' top him.

(II, v, 93-94)

To Toby physical objects are not merely viewed in the light of their potential military value, but in the light of their rhetorical value as well:

Whilst a man is free--cried the Corporal, giving a flourish with his stick thus---



A thousand of my father's most subtle syllogisms could not have said more for celibacy.

My uncle Toby look'd earnestly towards his cottage and his bowling green.

(IX, iv, 604)

There are a number of scenes in which the attitudes of the characters and the centre of the episode are expressed in the language of spatial relationships and objects within the local scene. Consider Walter Shandy, overcome with the disastrous news of Tristram's damaged nose:

My father lay stretched across the bed as still as if the hand of death had pushed him down, for a full hour and a half, before he began to play upon the floor with the toe of that foot which hung over the bed-side; my uncle Toby's heart was a pound lighter for it.--In a few minutes, his left-hand, the knuckles of which had all the time reclined upon the handle of the chamber-pot, came to its feeling--he thrust it a little more within the valance--drew up his hand, when he had done, into his bosom--gave a hem!

(IV, ii, 273-274)

Here, the entire drama of Tristram's father's collapse is translated into terms of his physical relation to the objects and space around him. It is noticeable that Tristram's father is particularly prone to these

speechless conditions in which his physical movements in relation to objects are his only language. For instance, the scene in which he discovers that uncle Toby has not been listening to him is conducted in flabbergasted silence.

[Walter] thrust back his chair,--rose up,--put on his hat,--took four long strides to the door,--jerked it open,--thrust his head half way out,--shut the door again,--took no notice of the bad hinge,--returned to the table,--pluck'd my mother's thread-paper out of Slawkenbergius's book,--went hastily to his bureau,--walk'd slowly back, twisting my mother's thread-paper around his thumb,--unbutton'd his waistcoat,--threw my mother's thread-paper into the fire,--bit her sattin pin-cushion in two, fill'd his mouth with bran. . . .

(III, xii, 239)

Apart from the simple impingement of objects and location upon the drama and their use in expressing dramatic moments, there are some objects which, being an essential part of a gesture or expression, are used to establish psychological characteristics. As Walter Shandy puts the matter:

There are a thousand unnoticed openings . . . which let a penetrating eye at once into a man's soul; and I maintain . . . that a man of sense does not lay down his hat in coming into a room,--or take it up in going out of it, but something escapes, which discovers him.

(VI, v, 415)

Dr. Slop's bewilderment is expressed by the movement of his eyes which looked:

. . . first in my uncle Toby's face--then in his--then up--then down--then east--east and by east, as so on,--coasting it along by the plinth of the wainscot till he

had got to the opposite point of the compass,--and that he had actually begun to count the brass nails upon the arm of his chair. . . .

(III, iii, 158)

Furthermore the appearance of objects is rationed. In the book itself there is not, even in the introduction to different scenes, the cataloguing of the sort given in the earlier parts of this section; instead, the objects and locations are discovered to the extent of their impingement upon, or psychological contributions to, the actions and characters of the community. The opening up and description of the world of things is conducted through the minds or significant actions of the characters; the world of objects only enters at those times when it would be vraisemblable for the characters to be seeing them or making some sort of contact with them. The objects are confronted in a way which is appropriate to the person who is in fact meeting them. It is this technique which renders the domestic scene so dense and precise; for, apart from the characters themselves, there are present in any major scene only such objects as are in fact extensions of them, their thinking, or their requirements. This approach to treating objects serves to build up a setting which is tailored to the strict "prop" requirements of the particular scenes. As the book proceeds, however, these objects begin to accumulate in the reader's mind, and

the rooms of Shandy Hall become furnished at a rate consistent with that at which the reader is coming to know the characters.

Thus, the physical objects and locations of the family community are selected, described and used in such a way that the particular scene is clear and precise at the level of the family community, though chaotic and unclear outside the family focus.

This selected treatment of objects so that their use is co-extensive with the dramatic or psychological requirements of the characters confirms that the domestic scene is implanted in the main narrative centre of the book. That is to say, the book builds up the domestic environment of objects around the characters in a way which is in harmony with the relationships of characters, the variety of their actions and hobby-horses, and the basic narrative. This relation of the characters to domestic things and the fact that episodes turn upon the presence or absence of an object or location confirms the primacy of the domestic element in the novel.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOMESTIC CHARACTER OF THE NARRATOR

The image of Tristram which emerges from the few direct references found in the first six volumes is that of a tall, thin man, racked by asthma, eccentrically dressed, and sitting for much of his time at an ink-stained desk in Shandy Hall reading his father's books and writing the family history. In Volume VII the narration of the "main story" is laid aside, except for a description of the Shandy household accompanying the young heir to Auxerre. The narrator becomes, in his final trip to France, the central subject of the narration so that the outlines of his character are further sketched in. This passage provides the longest period that we are directly in contact with the adult Tristram, and his manners and main concerns are clearly displayed in it.

As stated earlier, the reader is presented with an individual who has been shocked into recognizing that he is dying and who, consequently, is trying to escape death by fleeing to the Continent. The narrator realizes that he will not be able to write two volumes of his life and opinions every year for the next forty years:

No--I think, I said, I would write two volumes every year, provided the vile cough which then tormented me, and which to this hour I dread worse than the devil, would but give me leave--and in another place--(but where, I can't recollect now) . . . I swore it should be kept a going at that rate these forty years if it pleased but the fountain of life to bless me so long with health and good spirits.

(VIII, i, 479)

But it is clear that writing about his family is still the over-riding passion of his life. When the liveliness and joy of the scenes in France remind him of coming death, he ushers himself back to Perdrillo's pavilion and to his account of the family history:

--Why could I not live and end my days thus? Just disposer of our joys and sorrows, cried I, why could not a man sit down in the lap of content here--and dance, and sing, and say his prayers, and go to heaven with this nut brown maid? . . . Then 'tis time to dance off, quoth I. . . . I danced it along through Narbonne, Carcasson, and Castle Naudairy, till at last I danced myself into Perdrillo's pavillion, where pulling a paper of black lines, that I might go on straight forwards, without digression or parenthesis, in my uncle Toby's amours. . . .

(VII, xliii, 538)

Tristram is driven back to reconstructing the family history in his study even though life in France has delighted him and even though these are his last days. It is only through the narration of his family history that Tristram can discover why he is even in France, an odd figure dogged by small ills and death. Whether out of duty, or in pursuit of self-discovery, the family history is his primary interest.

As traveller and travel writer Tristram behaves

in a way consistent with the particularizing methods he employs in representing his family community. His interest in conventional sightseeing is slight and he satirizes the tourist-writer:

I know no more of Calais . . . than I do this moment of Grand Cairo; for it was dusky in the evening when I landed, and dark as pitch in the morning when I set out, and yet by merely knowing what is what, and by drawing this from that in one part of the town, and by spelling and putting this and that together in another-- I would lay any travelling odds, that I this moment . . . [could] write a chapter upon Calais as long as my arm.
 . . .

(VII, iv, 483)

In the same vein Paris is reduced to an enumeration of its streets:

In the quarter called the City--there are fifty three streets.

In St. James of the Shambles, fifty five streets.

In St. Oportune, thirty four streets.

In the quarter of the Louvre, twenty five streets.

In the quarter of the Luxembourg, sixty two streets.

And in that of St Germain, fifty five streets. . . .

(VII, ixx, 500)

Most of the towns and much of the countryside are viewed by Tristram as hazards in the flight from death. Steep hills and badly-made roads combined with a shoddily constructed chaise, incompetent drivers and commissaries collecting tolls slow down Tristram and prevent him from thinking or resting.

Tristram's interest in the everyday activities of men and women is not dulled. In fact it is as though the pressures of death make the conventional view of foreign

countries trivial and causes Tristram to focus, all the more strongly, on the immediate characteristics of people and their foibles. Indeed the very impermanence of the human world is seen by Tristram as a reason for concentrating on it:

There is not a town in all France, which in my opinion, looks better in the map, than Montreuil; -- I own, it does not look so well in the book of post roads; but when you come to see it -- to be sure it looks most pitifully.

There is one thing however in it at present very handsome; and that is the inn-keeper's daughter. . . .

--But your worships chuse rather that I give you the length, breadth, and perpendicular height of the great parish church, or a drawing of the façade of the abbey of Saint Austreberte which has been transported from Artois hither-- everything is just I suppose as the masons and carpenters left them,-- and if the belief in Christ continues so long, will be so these fifty years to come-- so your worships and reverences, may all measure them at your leisures--but he who measures thee, Janatone, must do it now,-- thou carriest the principles of change within thy frame. . . .

(VII, xi, 489-490)

Apart from these episodes in France the relation of the narrator to the world outside the writing of his autobiography is restricted to Shandy Hall. He is surrounded by the objects and places of his family's life. He speaks of reading his father's books in his father's study and he vows to preserve his uncle's bowling-green. But the major act of family affection is the writing of the work itself. The narrator works to recreate the springs of his identity. The following section discusses the narrator's reliance upon the family

sources and consciousness in achieving this end.

The whole of Sterne's novel is written as the autobiographical work of Tristram Shandy. Every passage of the book, including the dedications, preface and title page are made to come from the pen of Sterne's creation Tristram Shandy. It is Tristram Shandy who must select or edit those things in his family history which, as he sees them, best explain how he has come to be what he is. So the narrator may be regarded as the sole vehicle of family recall. And if we are to identify the special mode of seeing and knowing employed by the narrator in relation to his material, it is necessary to examine the processes of recall that he employs.

The salient characteristic of the operation of recollection necessary to the writing of Tristram Shandy is that the memory is collective. Remembrance does not depend upon Tristram alone. In fact for most of the book, the reader is afforded very little contact with Tristram at any date before the point that he started writing. Where he is on his journey in France or when he is referring to the conditions in his study, Tristram's memory and perceptions face the reader directly; but in the whole of the rest of the book, where the narrative lies in the past, before the writing, contact with a Tristram explicitly exercising his own capacity

for reliving the past he lived in is limited to four cases. First, Tristram speaks directly out of the past on one occasion ("I am this moment walking across the market-place of Auxerre with my father and uncle Toby, on our way back to dinner" (VII, xxviii, 516)). But there are no other direct existential statements from the past and this single example does not determine the sequence in which it occurs, which is given over completely to the behavior^u of uncle Toby and Tristram's father in Auxerre. The presence of Tristram in the past is only reported upon three other occasions. The child is held up to the window and is circumcised; he is clumsy with his top; and he observed the incident of the fly and his uncle Toby. In the case of the circumcision scene, the child is no more than the butt of the accident; there is no statement of his feelings, thoughts or disposition apart from the physical exposure to the fall. In the case of the top, the account entirely depends upon uncle Toby's memory except for the possibility that the child saw the shaking of uncle Toby's head. In the case of Tristram's watching uncle Toby and the fly, the account comes closest to a directly reported personal memory:

Go, says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke, to let it escape. . . .

I was but ten years old when this happened; but whether it was, that the action itself was more in unison to my nerves at that age of pity, which instantly set my whole frame into one vibration of most pleasurable sensation;--or how far the manner and

expression of it might go towards it;-- or in what degree, or by what secret magic,-- a tone of voice and harmony of movement, attuned by mercy, might find a passage to my heart, I know not. . . .

(II, xii, 113-114)

Here not only Tristram's presence in the past, but also his feelings and disposition are, to an extent, drawn out, and they are presented from his own remembrance. It is, moreover, at the level of moral formation, a very important event: "I often think that I owe one half of my philanthropy to that one accidental impression" (II, xii, 114). But, for all its moral significance to the narrator, it is indistinctly remembered, and it is an isolated episode in the narrative of the House of Shandy.

Only these few occasions turn upon direct reference to the narrator living in the pre-narration past. Within these occasions, the narrator's private recollection is subordinate or trivial, except in the case of the escape of the fly. For the bulk of the work, then, the memory that is at work is not that of Tristram unaided and alone, but the collective memory of the family and of the establishment, edited by Tristram's interpretative will, his moral position and his present concern. The narrator must, if we accept his protestations of verisimilitude, be using the memories of the family, the writings of members of the family, and the family lore in order to recreate the family itself and his existence within it.

This is not to say that in all other passages apart from the four given above Tristram is known to be absent or known to be using other than his own recollections, but only that in all cases outside the narrator's present and apart from the four above, the unaided personal recollections of Tristram are not thought adequate by him for discovering all that is to be presented. The book, therefore, rests upon a collective consciousness and memory--the collective memory of the whole family known to Tristram. The biography as it stands can only have been written with the assistance of the family as an agent of recall in its own right; and it is this circumstance, this operation of implied collective recollection, within the work that shows the relation between the narrator and his work to be as 'domestic' as the spatial and social limits in which it is set.

Tristram is the creature of a family consciousness, and writes, from within that body of stories, myths, scenes and worries. Of his direct sources, the Tristrapoedia, his father's notebook and uncle Toby's recollections, the legal documents (marriage settlement, aunt Dinah's will), and the contents of his father's library stand out. But it is more to the point to note that, whatever the liberties taken by the narrator in building scenes, conversations, and gestures, or in giving rein to a hobby horse at a particular moment, the

bases of these scenes and digressions concur with the developed character of the main protagonists and are plausible "finds" within the history of the family portrayed. Armed with the full range of family stories, family documents and family myths and his own capacity for family interpretation, Tristram can move in many directions and see far more than he himself was present at; but Sterne's contrivance of an honest autobiographer means that Tristram is constrained, in what he may be allowed to know, within the limits of the family memory.

The manner in which Tristram uses the collective family memory, the relation which he bears to the bulk of the material, provides the substance of the chapter on the concept of the domestic. It is argued there that when the author's particularising method, which uses the immediate empirical material, objects, actions and speeches to build the scene, is applied to the material of his own family background, the narrator's independent editorial and selective position, his creative relation to the material, is different from that in cases of scenes outside the family. The artist's engagement is different in that the material of that social setting is, more than that of all other social settings, revelatory about the personality and quality of the author. Whether this is explained in terms of heredity or in terms of conditioning it holds true that in societies where the family is the

cradle of social perception and consciousness, communication about his family is peculiarly revealing about the individual. In Tristram's case we know from the first line that he is dealing with his own family and, moreover, that he regards the work as peculiarly revealing of himself.

In the instance of the conception, the revelation that Tristram believes to be made of himself is ascribed to heredity; that is, to the determination of the man by the manner of his begetting. In the case of the circumcision, the influence upon him is from a family accident. But the instance of uncle Toby and the fly, quoted above, is given the status of a moment of crucial social conditioning. Furthermore there are a number of myths that are directly inherited and colour the way in which the adult Tristram sees himself. The theses of nasal deficiencies, impotence and the proneness of Tristram to mishaps are the most persistent. Thus during the French travels the vulnerability of Tristram to accidents is heightened by the fact that Tristram is abroad. The loss of his writings, his breeches and his money are withstood away from the security of his den. The mishap with ^{the} chaise-vamper's wife is peculiarly delicate in that it includes a domestic cameo of hair-curling at the same time as showing the correctness of Walter's prophecy concerning his offspring:

I had not waited half an hour, when the mistress came in, to take the papilliottes from off her hair, before she went to the May-poles----

. . . the toilet stands still for no man--so she jerk'd off her cap, to begin with them as she open'd the door, in doing which, one of them fell upon the ground--I instantly saw it was my own writing---

--O Siegneur! cried I -- you have got all my remarks upon your head, Madam! --J'en suis bien mortifiée said she---'tis well, thinks I, they have stuck there--for could they have gone deeper, they would have made such confusion in a French woman's noddle--She had better have gone with it unfrizled, to the day of eternity.

Tenez--said she--so without any idea of the nature of my suffering, she took them from her curls, and put them gravely one by one into my hat--one was twisted this way --another twisted that--ay! by my faith; and when they are published, quoth I,-----

They will be worse twisted still.

(VII, xxxviii, 530-531)

The indelible marks upon his consciousness made by his family are expressed by the thread in his brain:

I am lost myself!---

--- But 'tis my father's fault; and whenever my brains come to be dissected, you will perceive, without spectacles, that he has left a large uneven thread, as you sometimes see in an unsaleable piece of cambrick, running along the whole length of the web, and so untowardly, you cannot so much as cut out a **. . . .

Quanto id diligentius in liberis procreandis cavendum, sayeth Cardan.

(VI, xxxiii, 462-463)

There are other aspects of Tristram's life and opinions that realise or run parallel to the family's experiences in the past. In particular, the way in which the author approaches the business of writing is derived, with some modifications, from Walter Shandy's approach to his marital discussions:

The ancient Goths of Germany . . . had all of them a wise custom of debating every thing of importance to their

state, twice; that is, -- once drunk and once sober:-- Drunk--that their counsels might not want vigour; --- and sober--that they might not want discretion.

Now my father being entirely a water-drinker,--was a long time gravelled almost to death, in turning this . . . to his advantage. . . . [He] fixed and set apart the first Sunday night in the month, and the Saturday night which immediately preceded it, to argue it over, in bed with my mother. . . .

. . . These my father . . . called his beds of justice. . . . It must not be made a secret of to the world, that this answers full as well in literary discussions, as either in military or conjugal . . .

My way is this:--

In all nice and ticklish discussions--- (of which, heaven knows, there are but too many in my book)-- where I find I cannot take a step without the danger of having either their worships or their reverences upon my back-- I write one half full, and t' other fasting; --or write it all full,--and correct it fasting;--or write it fasting,-- and correct it full. . . .

(VI, xvii, 434-436)

But one of the strongest indications of the narrator's immersion in the family during the period of the writing of the book are the influences upon his descriptions derived from the hobby-horses of his father and uncle. Uncle Toby's military vision is repeatedly assumed in the narrator's delineation of a scene to which it is appropriate:

---Had my uncle Toby shot a bullet thro' my father's heart, he could not have fallen down with his nose upon the quilt so suddenly.

(IV, iii, 274)

In the whole episode with widow Wadman the military jargon is assumed wherever appropriate. Thus the passage through the wicker gate transforms the widow into a military genius:

Mrs Wadman had scarce open'd the wicker-gate, when her genius sported with the change of circumstances.

---She formed a new attack in a moment.

(VIII, xxiii, 576)

Or in Tristram's own descriptions, we read:

An eye is for all the world exactly like a cannon, in this respect; That it is not so much the eye or the cannon, in themselves, as it is the carriage of the eye-- and the carriage of the cannon, by which both the one and the other are enabled to do so much execution.

(VIII, xxiii, 577)

These examples suggest that where the localising perceptions of the narrator are used to recreate the domestic scene from family memories and sources, Tristram as narrator is overtaken by the family vision, mythology, and adopts the relevant family vocabulary.

But more cogent examples of the narrator's stylistic engrossment in the family, as he unites and focuses upon the domestic scene, are the arguments he, implicitly or explicitly, conducts with his father. Of these, the discussion about the force of heredity is one of the most significant. Referring to uncle Toby, Tristram writes:

His humour was of that particular species, which does honour to our atmosphere; and I should have made no scruple of ranking him amongst one of the first-rate productions of it, had not there appear'd too many strong lines in it of a family-likeness, which shewed that he derived the singularity of his temper more from blood, than either wind or water, or any modifications or combinations of them whatever: And I have, therefore, oft times wondered that my father, tho' I believe he had his reasons for it, upon his observing

some tokens of excentricity in my course when I was a boy,--should never once endeavour to account for them in this way; for all the SHANDY FAMILY were of an original character throughout. . . .

(I, xxi, 65)

Tristram's views and approaches to the world are, either in disagreement or consent, entwined with the concerns he ascribes to his father. His authorities differ, (Locke is not included in his father's library) but his manner of handling his themes is in direct relation to his father's treatment of his obsessions. We may end with an example of Tristram in the grip of a philosophical thought in the manner that also takes his father, though he uses, as his father does not, the immediate local situation to concretise and particularise his thoughts and bring the reader back to Tristram, sitting alone in his study, facing his family circumstances:

I hate set dissertations, -- and above all things in the world, 'tis one of the silliest things in one of them, to darken your hypothesis by placing a number of tall, opake words, one before another, in a right line, betwixt your own and your reader's conception, -- when in all likelihood, if you had looked about, you might have seen something standing, or hanging up, which would have cleared the point at once, -- "for what hinderance, hurt or harm doth the laudable desire of knowledge bring to any man, if even from a sot, a pot, a fool, a stool, a winter-mittain, a truckle for a pully, the lid of a goldsmith's crucible, an oyl bottle, an old slipper, or a cane chair", -- I am this moment sitting upon one. Will you give me leave to illustrate this affair of wit and judgement by the two knobs on the top of the back of it, -- they are fasten'd on, you see, with two pegs stuck slightly into two gimlet-holes, and will place what I have to say in so clear a light, as to let you see through the drift and meaning of my whole preface, as plainly as if every point and particle of it was made up

of sun beams.

I enter now directly upon the point.

-- Here stands wit, --- and there stands judgement, close beside it, just like the two knobbs I'm speaking of, upon the back of this self same chair on which I am sitting.

(III, xx, 200)

The domestic material laid out in the two preceding chapters of this thesis is not described by a narrator standing outside it, but by a man who lived in and was moulded by that material; one whose thoughts during the seven years previous to his death were obsessed by the family; whose singularity of temper is derived "more from blood than either wind or water", and whose actions reveal him to be the fulfillment of his father's prophecy: an oblique figure who could only have emerged from the Shandy family. Tristram's identity, as it is revealed by the narrative, can only be understood in terms of his domestic history. It is not surprising that the relationship such a man has with the reader can be read as domestic. It is this dimension of Tristram Shandy which is explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE RELATION BETWEEN NARRATOR AND READER

There has been, in modern criticism, an increasing focus on the relationship between the narrator and the reader. It is somewhat surprising therefore to find that in Tristram Shandy, a book in which that relationship is both singular and important, critical attention along these lines has been limited. Perhaps the most cogent analysis of this relationship is found in Wayne Booth's Rhetoric of Fiction. As was noted in the introductory chapter, Booth establishes that the unity of Tristram Shandy lies in the role played by the narrator, who is primarily telling a story about himself. The book turns, then, on Tristram's commentary; indeed,

. . . to talk of eliminating commentary from the narrator's arsenal . . . would be absurd. The battle [between Tristram and the outside world] is¹ shown in the commentary; telling has become showing.

A direct and intimate relationship between the reader and Tristram makes this commentary effective:

Our knowledge of his character does . . . make everything that has touched [Tristram] seem worth talking about. Our friendship is, in one sense more complete than any friendship in real life, because we know everything that is known about Tristram and we see the world as he sees it. Our interests correspond with his interests, and his style is thus used in a larger context that helps to give it life; in this respect our

relationship is more like identity than friendship, despite the many respects in which we keep our distance from him.²

Booth then offers a brief description of the part played by the narrator's self-revelations in creating a tension within the reader's mind between sympathy for the narrator and a critical assessment of his fault. But, though Booth does appreciate Tristram's work "not only in its all-over effect, but even in the texture from line to line, from comment to comment . . ."³, he does not deal with the question of how this "texture from line to line" effects the entrance of the reader into the world Tristram creates.

And Tristram does require our entrance into this world, and, more than that, he demands, as Booth points out, a relationship which is based on our identifying with him so closely that all matters which concern him concern us:

I have undertaken, you see, to write not only my life, but my opinions also; hoping and expecting that your knowledge of my character, and of what kind of mortal I am, by the one, would give you a better relish for the other: As you proceed further with me, the slight acquaintance which is now beginning betwixt us, will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is at fault, will terminate in friendship. --- O diem praeclarum!! --then nothing which has touched me will be thought trifling in its nature, or tedious in its telling.

(I, vi, 10-11)

The main concern of the two narrative lines operating in Tristram Shandy is the description of the lives and

opinions of the Shandy family, servants and friends as they are revealed in the ordinary actions and conversations of that community. The narrator, as he reveals himself in these narratives is, in large measure, a creation of the family. On two counts then, the relationship between the reader and narrator is domestic. First, the subject matter from which the reader learns who Tristram is, is primarily domestic. Second, the narrator himself chooses to reveal himself to the reader through this material. He insists upon a domestic identity as well as that of the jester or professional writer. The domesticity of the reader-narrator relationship is, as well, established along a third dimension, that which concerns the problems of writing themselves. The technical problems of communicating one's life and opinions in writing are so displayed by Tristram as he works in his particular circumstances -- in Shandy Hall or Perdrillo's pavilion -- that the reader knows and shares the problems as if he were himself engaged in revealing his own domestic identity, as if he were using his own understanding of what it is to unearth and expose his home.

A discussion of the domestic relationship between reader and narrator entails a discussion of how Tristram manages to destroy our preconceptions about a character's life and opinions and manages to carry us into his world. The success of Tristram's appeal for the reader's

friendship depends on his destroying our objectivity, our ability to disregard what he is saying. We must be brought to a position in which all that has touched Tristram will not "be thought of as trifling in its nature, or tedious in its telling", and in which Tristram's subjective family recreations will be directly re-lived by us. Moreover, if this friendship is to grow, a flexible, but secure space must be provided for it within Tristram's world. These conditions, which are necessary for the establishment of a domestic relationship between Tristram and the reader are interdependent: the narrator's "method" of breaking down our non-Shandian attitudes acts at the same time as a statement of the existence of another world, one in which a slight acquaintance is, potentially, a friend.

Calling the narrator's approach to this problem a "method" and indeed discussing it in terms of a problem, given the easy style of the narrator, would seem, at least superficially, to be unwarranted. But while such an approach may be pedestrian in the face of Tristram's whimsy, the fact that Sterne discarded half of his first two volumes,⁴ suggests that for him there were problems in writing Tristram Shandy, problems in bringing the reader into the autobiography.

The difficulties facing Tristram, when he sets out to explain himself to the reader, can be illustrated

by considering a simple archeological act within a reader's own experience. Consider the emptying of the pockets of a pair of forgotten jeans worn when I was ten. The bits of stolen cigarettes, the old keys, the fluff, the objects chosen then, and under discussion now, are laid before us on the table. I am immediately faced with the fact that while these objects are a part of an existing and personal reality to me, they are nothing to you, unless of course, there is a common ground between us; or we are already intimate. If a friendship does not exist already, it is obvious my explanations will remain tentative and unexplored and your attitude to them will be one of patronage or boredom. Furthermore this friendship will have to be one which gives me a context in which to situate my reality. Yet, at the same time, the only dimensions of reality that are immediately present are the archeological "find" and ourselves. There is a parallel between the difficulty in your entering a world which centers on a few objects pulled from a pocket, and the reluctance which both of us have in the face of a Shandian world in which everything is not only "big with jest", but, on an important level, in a muddle. It is this reluctance which Sterne, artfully, and Tristram, rather more ingeniously, have to destroy. Furthermore, Tristram does not have the advantage of the physical presence of the "finds" to fascinate his friend. This

chapter will deal then, both with the way in which our objectivity with regard to the autobiography is destroyed, and with our place in Tristram's world.

The first move that the narrator makes is to converse with his reader. "Writing", declares Tristram, "is but a different name for conversation" (II, xi, 108). It presupposes therefore an interlocutor. In a number of passages the nature of the interlocutor is determined for us. When the breath of a scandal or a risqué proposition is abroad, a certain "Madam" is addressed--to be expostulated with. As Ian Watt points out in his introduction, these directly addressed interlocutors embrace reviewers, pedants, lords, censorious prudes and his main friends Jenny, Garrick and Eugenius⁵. But it would be an error to regard Tristram as addressing us through them. We are clearly present at the same time; the conversation is between three or more, with the reader, for the time being, not addressed. The case where Tristram sends Madam back to discover that he had just shown his mother was not a Catholic makes this plain. While the good woman is occupied thus, we are addressed directly as sympathetic and more careful friends waiting for her return; we are placed, moreover, in the embarrassing position of not being able to go back with her to discover our own carelessness, but of having to chat with Tristram the while. Thus Tristram appeals in the name

of a growing friendship to readers who are not directly named or characterised--who are not in the same sense created:

As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all; -- so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.

(II, xi, 108-109)

The success of Tristram's writing, as conversation with the reader, depends on Tristram's ability to create an attitude in his readers which will fulfill two conditions: Tristram assumes that we will be unable to predict his next move and secondly, that we will be able to recognize the general shape of the world he constructs. Critical response attests to the fulfillment of these assumptions: it has recognized that Tristram is "scatty", "eccentric", and "inconsistent", and yet it has been possible to redescribe the characters of Uncle Toby and Walter and to reconstruct Shandy Hall. But we need not appeal to outside evidence to show the success of Tristram's narrative. The analysis of a few scenes will make it clear that Tristram's logic is one which is peculiar to him and, given the odd turn of his mind, unpredictable. At the same time, the reader's reconstruction of Tristram's fragmented reality into a whole, shifting though its outlines may be, points to our intuition of

the processes of that inner reality and our recognition of the particular elements out of which it is composed.

We are confronted, in the first chapter, by a narrator who appears to us to be quaint and scatter-brained, if not mad:

I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly considered how much depended upon what they were then doing; ---- that not only the production of a rational Being was concern'd in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind; -- and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost:----- Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly, -- I am verily persuaded I should have made quite a different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me. -- Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it; -- you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transferred from father to son, etc. etc. -- and a great deal to that purpose: -- Well, you may take my word, that nine parts of ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world depend upon their motion and activity, and the different tracks and trains you put them into, so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a halfpenny matter, -- away they go clattering like hey-go-mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden-walk, which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it.

Pray my dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock? -- Good G---! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time, --- Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question? Pray, what was your father saying? ---Nothing.

(I, i, 4-5)

In the first sentence a direct relationship

between the reader and the narrator is set up: the use of the "I wish" brings the reader into the narrator's immediate confidence. This initial openness between the narrator and the reader is maintained and reinforced in subsequent sentences. The "I" is the focus, the unifying force, in the introduction. It is "I" who should have made "quite a different figure in the world from that in which the reader is likely to see me" if "my father" and "my mother" had "minded what they were about when they begot me": if "my mother" had not interrupted "my father" with a common household question. The direct appeal for sympathy is plain. The wish, after a delay of the tendentious statement, "as they were in duty both equally bound to it", is found to refer to an event which is irreversible. The wish of the narrator is in vain; yet, already, we learn from it something of the author's present concern with his past. The actual event on which the scene turns informs the reader of a moment in the family life. The idea of parents pondering over the process of creating a child while doing so is funny and strange in the light of the passion which is supposed to accompany the sexual act. The wit rests in the serious consideration being juxtaposed with the routine household act which opens the story. From the outset the narrator-conversationalist has created for himself a freedom to comment in a number of modes -- as the moralist, the

pseudo-scientist ("nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world" depend upon "the animal spirits"), the clown and the existential participant ("I am verily persuaded, I should have made quite a different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me.")--even while he begins to display the 'pockets' of his family. The material content (the conception and the clock) is slight--though of a nature which directly interests everyone out of a family, but the narrator has, on the basis of it, developed a multi-faceted persona for himself directly appealing for the reader's sympathy. Furthermore, the material events of the scene descend upon the reader as flashes: "Pray my dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock?" The narrator applies the lesson that if you would interest your interlocutor both in the contents of a pocket and in yourself, it is best to produce them one by one after an oblique, even irrelevant, build-up. The reader's first reaction is fascinated confusion. The relationship which was beginning, in fits and starts, to develop between the narrator and reader appears to have vanished completely and with it the framework the reader had settled into. "My mother's" comment in all its triviality hangs heavily between us, referring, as far as the reader can see, to nothing. We are forced to give our full attention to the

unpredictable Tristram and read on, hoping for an explanation. Instead of receiving one directly, the scene is sketched out further --- "Good G---!" cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time, ---Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?". The desire for an explanation not yet given is balked by the narrator who speaks for the bewildered reader he himself created: ("Pray, what was your father saying?"). If we are going to like Tristram we will go on, and his conjuror's manner and the many faces he is able to present us as entertainer, wit and thinker make us predisposed, somehow, at some time, to become his friend.

It is by such verbal attacks that the reader loses his ability to judge the narrative independently of the narrator. Commentary like Tristram's, which shifts from abstract argument to demonstration, from present relationships to past, and which piles enormous effects onto trivial causes, all delivered in a half-playful, half-serious tone, permeate Tristram Shandy. Its effect is to leave the reader quite giddy and compel him either to abandon the book or to involve himself completely in it. We are addressed, either as a large audience--"good folks"--or, as in the above case, as individuals. Either way a direct and sympathetic response is called for and

acted upon by the narrator. Tristram presumes such a relationship in the next chapter, for, though the first chapter has been concluded, the tableau which ended it has not. Tristram continues to explain to the still-pondering questioner what the reader already knows:

-Then, positively, there is nothing in the question [Pray, my dear . . . have you not forgot to wind up the clock?], that I can see, either good or bad.---Then let me tell you, Sir, it was a very unseasonable question at least, ---because it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits, whose business it was to have escorted and gone hand-in-hand with the HOMUNCULUS, and conducted him safe to the place for his reception.

(I, ii, 5)

Tristram's attitude towards the reader is, in the first volume, friendly and confiding with occasional lapses into irritation and arrogance. The reader's reactions to Tristram's overtures are much more tentative. Once we have discovered our initial mistake, that of equating discontinuity and wit with silliness, we move from wariness as we suspect Tristram of being ironic at our expense, to amusement as his playfulness is revealed, to chagrin at our slowness, to wariness and so on. This wavering response is only indirectly a result of Tristram's attitude to the reader, since that, as we have seen, is predominantly well-wishing. It is accountable for in more general terms; that is, in the difficulty the reader has in assessing Tristram's mind, and following from that, his world.

The reader first introduced to Tristram Shandy is

led by the title to expect a straight-forward autobiography. Instead he is introduced to a narrator who asserts that the most important event of his life was his conception--an event at which Tristram's very presence is debatable, and which is described in terms of his mother's association between it and a household duty. The reader who expects to see Tristram at what are generally thought to be crucial and formative points in his life is constantly thwarted by the confrontations with domestic, trivial scenes. By addressing us, however, as if we were personally interested in the particulars of his affairs, our wariness by and large evaporates and our interest becomes real. A friendship begins to develop between the reader and Tristram as the latter predicted. This is not to say, however, that the relationship between the narrator and reader continues along a straight-forward line.

The weight placed on Tristram's begetting forces the reader to reconstitute his view concerning the narrator, but it does not remove the expectations of an obliquely viewed, but still essentially "normal", patterning of Tristram's life. His conception is a recognizable starting point and the reader looks forward to the event logically following it, the narrator's birth. But it early appears that Tristram's conception is a discrete event and not part of a structure patterned on the

chronological record of his life and the development of his opinions. Tristram's unfortunate beginning is followed by a family tableau taking place four years after his birth, then by the dedication, then by a description of Yorick and so on. By the end of the second volume, though we have been introduced to all the major characters and have learned a great deal about the family, Tristram has not yet been born--indeed we discover that this event does not take place until the end of the third volume, over one-third of the way through the book.

Tristram writes his book as a series of digressions and progressions, playing on the reader's expectations of what is progressive and what is not and undercutting still further the possibility of our retaining an independent position with respect to his narrative.

The hustle and bustle of a household waiting for Tristram's birth is first heard in the parlour:

I wonder what's all that noise, and running backwards and forwards for, above the stairs, quoth my father, addressing himself, after an hour and a half's silence, to my uncle Toby . . . - What can they be doing brother? quoth my father,---we can scarce hear ourselves talk.

I think, replied my uncle Toby, taking his pipe from his mouth, and striking the head of it two or three times upon the nail of his left thumb, as he began his sentence. . . .

(I, xxi, 63)

But the reader is neither to hear the rest of uncle Toby's sentence, nor to hear of Tristram's birth at this point.

I think, says he;---But to enter rightly into my uncle Toby's sentiments upon this matter, you must be made to enter first a little into his character, the outlines of which I shall just give you. . . .

And then, Tristram assures us, "the dialogue between him and my father will go on as well again" (I, xxi, 63).

The promised description of uncle Toby's character is not immediately entered into. We are not given, nor, we discover when we read on, are we ever given an external and complete picture of Tristram's uncle; instead, Tristram, in the manner of Walter Shandy, enters into a philosophical discussion on the formation of character in man. His discussion cannot, however, remain for long on this topic: his family history breaks in on him, and he turns to the reader to remind him of the "main" subject:

But I forget my uncle Toby, whom all this while we have left knocking the ashes out of his tobacco pipe.

(I, xxi, 65)

As yet, we do not understand the connection between Toby and his ancestors, so that the introduction to aunt Dinah, a character who has not been a member of the Shandy household for several years, does not appear to follow from this. We had expected to be returned to the parlour to hear the end of Toby's comment. The description of former family relations ends, not with a return to uncle Toby's unfinished sentence but with a mere reminder of the half-sketched scene and a flamboyant

justification of the digression the narrator has written and the reader read:

I was just going, for example, to have given you the great out-lines of my uncle Toby's most whimsical character;--when my aunt Dinah and the coachman came a-cross us, and led us a vagary some millions of miles into the very heart of the planetary system: Notwithstanding all this you perceive that the drawing of my uncle Toby's character went on gently all the time;--not the great contours of it,--that was impossible,--but some familiar strokes and faint designations of it, were here and there touch'd in, as we went along, so that you are much better acquainted with my uncle Toby now than you were before.

(I, xxii, 72)

While it is undoubtedly true that we have now become "better acquainted" with uncle Toby in some way, though not the way we had expected, we still have no idea, since Toby's comment was unfinished, as to the relevance of the information we have just received. Fourteen pages of digression and several pages of reminder have convinced us to leave the matter in Tristram's hands. We are prepared for the next discussion which, we soon realize, is both pertinent to our own inquiries and interesting in its whimsy. But Tristram does not allow us to remain for long in this acquiescent position. He reminds us again of the impatience we should be feeling:

If I was not morally sure that the reader must be out of all patience for my uncle Toby's character,--I would here previously have convinced him, that there is no instrument so fit to draw such a thing with, as that which I have pitch'd upon.

(I, xxiv, 77)

So we are to return to uncle Toby and Tristram's father

at last. But wait: "A man and his HOBBY HORSE . . ."

And Tristram continues, contrary to his declaration, to convince the reader that a man's hobby horse is a true expression of him, then to describe uncle Toby's last military campaign, his wound and subsequent illness.

Suddenly Tristram shifts the narrative, leaving uncle Toby and his man Trim at the height of their military fever posting down to the country to create their own battlefield:

How my uncle Toby and Corporal Trim managed this matter,--with the history of their campaigns, which were no way barren of events,--may make no uninteresting underplot in the epitasis and working of this drama. ---At the present the scene must drop,--and change for the parlour fire-side.

CHAPTER VI

---What can they be doing, brother? said my father. ---I think, replied my uncle Toby, --taking, as I told you, his pipe from his mouth, and striking the ashes out of it as he began his sentence;--I think, replied he,--it would not be amiss, brother, if we rung the bell.

(II, v-vi, 99)

The completion of the sentence raises new problems for the reader. In the first place it cuts short several new subjects--leaving them, like Toby's comment, unfinished. With assurances of their importance and new promise to return to them, Tristram forces us to retain them in the front of our minds. In the second place, our increased knowledge of uncle Toby, knowledge important enough to warrant an interruption in mid-sentence,

cannot easily be married, as the reader had expected it could, to the end of that sentence. Fearing another of Tristram's tricks, like the one played previously on Madam, the reader attempts to find, in a perfectly innocuous comment, an illustration of either uncle Toby's modesty or his obsession. The construction of this episode--the sudden interruption, followed by the building up of information, the relevance of which could only be to clarify the interrupted sentence, then the completed sentence, which in terms of the information is a non-sequitur--is a brilliant example of the breakdown of the cause and effect sequence. The reader is trapped, both by the knowledge he has (the cause) and by the knowledge that he hasn't (the effect) into reading on.

The progressive-digressive technique, since it depends on the train of ideas passing through Tristram's mind, as the reader is beginning to learn, and not on a system of logic held in common by both Tristram and ourselves, holds us constantly in suspense. Tristram can, as in the example just cited, break out of any subject to discuss another which is not apparently related to the first. Because these jumps stem from the mind of a member of the family, they are connected to each other.

We are forced to meet the characters as Tristram wishes us to meet them, as people living in concrete domestic circumstances, conversing and acting in a way

which is consistent with the immediate circumstances, the family community and the interests of Tristram and his characters. We are not presented with a set of characteristics called uncle Toby, but with a man whom we watch move and talk within the family, and with digressions which explore the "background", the theories, the interests and the past history of that man and that scene. The reader has to assess what is going on in uncle Toby's head on the basis of information Tristram claims is relevant. As a consequence the reader is often left in the same predicament as Walter Shandy, wondering what is going on in Toby's mind. A further technique used by Tristram to involve the reader in his narrative is that of slowing down the action taking place within a scene until the problems involved in the actual production of the scene are revealed. The involvement here is with Tristram in the present, Tristram faced by technical problems which reoccur every time he sits in his study with his pen and paper. The conversation and the movements of uncle Toby and Walter Shandy as they descend the stairway are a case in point:

What a chapter of chances, said my father, turning himself about upon the first landing, as he and my uncle Toby were going down stairs--what a long chapter of chances do the events of this world lay open to us! Take pen and ink in hand, brother Toby, and calculate it fairly--I know no more of calculations than this balluster, said my uncle Toby, (striking short of it with his crutch, and hitting my father a desperate blow souse upon his shin-bone)---'Twas a hundred to one--cried my uncle

Toby. I thought, quoth my father, (rubbing his shin) you had known nothing of calculations, brother Toby. ---'Twas a meer chance, said my uncle Toby---Then it adds one to the chapter - replied my father.

. . . .

CHAP. X

Is it not a shame to make two chapters of what passed in going down one pair of stairs? for we are got no farther yet than to the first landing, and there are fifteen more steps down to the bottom; and for aught I know, as my father and my uncle Toby are in a talking humour, there may be as many chapters as steps;--let that be as it will, Sir, I can no more help it than my destiny: --A sudden impulse comes across me---drop the curtain, Shandy --I drop it --Strike a line here across the paper, Tristram --I strike it --and hey for a new chapter!

. . . .

CHAP. XI

We shall bring all things to rights, said my father, setting his foot upon the first step from the landing---This Trismegistus, continued my father, drawing his leg back, and turning to my uncle Toby --- was the greatest (Toby) of all earthly beings. . . .

. . . .

CHAP. XII

--And how does your mistress? cried my father, taking the same step over again from the landing, and calling to Susannah, whom he saw passing by the foot of the stairs with a huge pin-cushion in her hand.. . . .

. . . .

CHAP. XIII

Holla! --you chairman! --here's sixpence --do step into that bookseller's shop, and call me a day-tall critick. I am very willing to give any one of 'em a crown to help me with his tackling, to get my father and my uncle Toby off the stairs, and even put them to bed.

. . . .

--So then, friend! you have got my father and my uncle Toby off the stairs, and seen them to bed? --And how did you manage it? --You dropp'd a curtain at the stairs foot --I thought you had no other way for it --Here's a crown

for your trouble.

(IV, ix-xiii, 279-287)

The description of the descent threatens to expand to half a volume or by Tristram's calculations, a five minute conversation has in it the potential to set him back three months. The problem of ending the scene becomes, since both reader and writer are involved, a mutual one (what the one writes the other will read). The enterprising reader will have discovered how difficult it is to cut off a scene in which some aspect of the family is being explored if he, as well as the critic, takes up Tristram's offer and attempts to "get my father and my uncle Toby off the stairs, and . . . put them to bed". Like the critic who would have complained of Tristram's high-handed methods if Tristram had not forced him to face the narrator's own difficulties, the reader finds that he too must end the scene by dropping a curtain over it:

--So then, friend! You have got my father and my uncle Toby off the stairs, and seen them to bed? --And how did you manage it? --You dropp'd a curtain at the stairs foot--I thought you had no other way for it-- Here's a crown for your trouble.

(IV, xiii, 286-287)

The more general predicament facing Tristram in the writing of his autobiography--the problems involved in "letting the reader into the secret from first, to last, of every thing which concerns [him]" (I, iv, 7) and yet completing the autobiography--is presented

concretely by Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy's slow descent. We have followed Tristram through four volumes and have witnessed only two of those events which, we are constantly reminded, constitute the progressive element of Tristram's story. Tristram sums up our precarious position, that "Strange State of affairs between the reader and myself":

I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume--and no further than to my first day's life--'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out, so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it--on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back--was every day of my life to be as busy a day as this--And why not?--and the transactions and opinions of it to take up as much description--And for what reason should they be cut short? as at this rate I should just live 364 times faster than I should write--It must follow, an' please your worships, that the more I write, the more I will have to write--and consequently, the more your worships read, the more your worships will have to read.

(IV, xiii, 285-286)

In exposing the problems of the particular, and involving the reader in them, Tristram causes us to re-evaluate what at first appeared as a formal technique: his digressive and progressive method, a method which constantly involves dropping a curtain over a scene. The moment a scene is described or a subject touched upon, it brings to mind a host of thoughts which must be recorded before the reader will duly understand the point in hand. And, of course, once a digression is entered upon a further

body of information has to be given in order for us to understand the digression.

. . . when a man is telling a story in the strange way I do mine, he is obliged continually to be going backwards and forwards to keep all tight together in the reader's fancy--which, for my own part, if I did not take heed to do more than at first, there is so much unfixed and equivocal matter starting up, with so many breaks and gaps in it,--and so little service do the stars afford, which, nevertheless, I hang up in some of the darkest passages, knowing that the world is apt to lose its way, with all the lights the sun itself at noon-day can give it. . . .

(VI, xxxiii, 462)

Tristram, for instance, leaves his father lying miserably across the bed while he attempts to explain to the reader the cause of his father's concern. His explanation rapidly becomes entangled with others:

My mother, you must know,--but I have fifty things more necessary to let you know first, --I have a hundred difficulties which I have promised to clear up, and a thousand distresses and domestic misadventures crouding in upon me thick and three-fold, one upon the neck of another,--a cow broke in (to-morrow morning) to my uncle Toby's fortifications, and eat up two ratios and half of dried grass, tearing up the sods with it. . . . Trim insists upon being tried by a court-martial,--the cow to be shot,--Slop to be crucifix'd,--myself to be tristram'd, and at my very baptism made a martyr of;--poor unhappy devils that we are!--I want swaddling. . . .

(III, xxxvii, 235)

The list is broken off, by the memory of his father, still lying across the bed:

--but there is no time to be lost in exclamations.-- I have left my father lying across his bed, and my uncle Toby in his old fringed chair, sitting beside him, and promised I would go back to them in half an hour, and five and thirty minutes are laps'd already. . . .

(III, xxxviii, 235)

Tristram, despite his protestations of the urgency of the scene interrupted by his digressions, finds the weight of all that he has left to explain, too heavy to shed lightly. He continues:

Of all the perplexities a mortal author was ever seen in,--this certainly is the greatest,--for I have Hafen Slawkenbergius's folio, Sir, to finish--a dialogue between my father and my uncle Toby, upon the solutions of Prignitz, Scroderus, Ambrose Paraeus, Ponocrates and Grangousier to relate,--a tale out of Slawkenbergius to translate, and all this in five minutes less, than no time at all;--such a head!--would to heaven! my enemies saw only the inside of it!

(III, xxvii, 235)

The past--"The dialogue between my father and my uncle Toby upon the solutions of Prignitz . . . and Grangousier"--the present--"my father lying across the bed"--and the future--"a cow broke in (tomorrow morning) to my uncle Toby's fortifications" occur simultaneously in the author's mind when he reflects upon noses. These multiple levels of thought have all, at some point to be conveyed to the reader, in a manner which retains the haphazardness of the process of reflection, by a sequence of words which at any given moment can transmit only one of these levels. The gap between thoughts as they arise and thoughts when they are articulated, is lessened by Tristram's lack of regard for formal requirements. Short snatches of sentences, as in the above quotations, follow each other at a furious pace connected only by the dash; the inside of Tristram's head--filled with thoughts on and

about his family history--is recorded on paper, as incomplete thought is piled onto incomplete thought.

Tristram gets as lost in the narration of "so much unfixed and equivocal matter" as the reader does in the reading of it. Thus the vagaries of the book become themselves a means of establishing a common identity between Tristram and the reader. The everyday activity of Tristram, the writing of his autobiography, becomes a part of the everyday activity of the reader. Both are faced by a book, the writing and reading of which impinges on other aspects of both reader and narrator's existence:

. . . the more I write, the more I will have to write--and consequently, the more your worships read, the more your worships will have to read.

Will this be good for your worship's eyes?

It will do well for mine; and was it not that my OPINIONS will be the death of me, I perceive I shall lead a fine life of it out of this self-same life of mine; or in other words, shall lead a couple of fine lives together.

(IV, xiii, 286)

The broken sentences, the digressions, the emphasis on domestic material, originate from a desire on Tristram's part to communicate everything to the reader so interested--"It's in pure compliance with this humour of theirs [that of those readers who wish to know everything about Tristram], and from a backwardness in my nature to disappoint any one soul living, that I have been so particular already . . ." (I, iv, 7). We must, since Tristram's

first concern is the reader, respond to him along the only line he has left open to us, that of mutual friendship, a friendship which is based on Tristram's obsession with his family, and our own understanding of the importance of family community.

Simultaneous with the bond of mutual uncertainty, which is developing between reader and writer, is another of shared knowledge. We are constantly reminded that it is Tristram Shandy's mind which has assembled this work; that Tristram Shandy is a "history book . . . of what passes in . . . [the narrator's] own mind" (II, ii, 85). And that, although the book is the portrait of a consistently inconsistent mind, it is nevertheless, the portrait of one particular mind implanted within a very particular reality. That reality is formed in large measure, by the interrelation between the various members of the Shandy household, and a few friends. We are introduced to these characters in surroundings which are familiar to them all--the parlour, the bedroom, the kitchen and the small world around Shandy Hall. All, even the most private of rooms, becomes familiar to us, and we enter them freely at any moment Tristram chooses:

I shall explain the nature of these beds of justice in my next chapter; and in the chapter following that, you shall step with me, Madam, behind the curtain, only to hear in what kind of manner my father and mother debated between themselves, this affair of the breeches,--from which you may form an idea, how they debated all lesser matters.

(VI, xvii, 434)

From behind the curtain of Tristram's mind we are able to watch the characters carrying on their normal activities uninhibited by our presence. Tristram's ability to recreate these scenes stems from the fact that his thoughts and feelings all spiral from and back to his family. As the book progresses, as the reader begins to learn more about this reality, Tristram's conviction that his family history can only be recounted by a digressive and progressive technique comes to make more sense. The family, as Tristram points out,

. . . was certainly a simple machine, as it consisted of a few wheels; yet there was this much to be said for it, that these wheels were set in motion by so many different springs, and acted one upon the other from such a variety of strange principles and impulses,--that though it was a simple machine, it had all the honour and advantages of a complex one. . . .

(V, vi, 358)

As a member of this family, Tristram can only, given its complexities and his involvement in those complexities, use a narrative method which will allow him the freedom to explore the "wheels" as they operate. Hence Tristram's description of his narrative method is consistent with his view of the family:

I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections, and have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going. . . .

(I, xxii, 73)

This method of becoming better acquainted with the

characters--the piling up of "discrete knowledge" into images the outlines of which are constantly shifting and never fully drawn--is an open-ended one. The information we acquire about the characters is never brought together and solidified by a scene which illustrates everything we know; instead some facts are left hanging, and others are withheld. As a result we are made constantly aware both of the complexities of a character, and of the complexities involved in actually meeting him. We remain suspended, as we do in life, between knowledge and uncertainty. We meet the characters in the same way as Tristram re-encounters them while he is writing about them, that is, in a domestic context which becomes as important to the reader as it is to the characters.

Tristram's struggle to shape his material into a linear narrative line while yet retaining the multiplicity of the experience is, like his whole haphazard approach to the story, a concrete matter, not simply because, in describing his family he discusses himself, but also because he has spent most of the last several years trying to communicate his life and opinions to the reader. Writing is brought down to the level of lived experience, a level which the reader, in reading what he writes, shares with him. The narrator expects the reader to decipher a marbled page--"motley emblem of my work"--translate the asterisks and all they signify, draw the

widow Wadman and engage in his verbal games. The direct appeal for help works in the same way:

Now in order to clear up the mist which hangs upon these three pages, I must endeavour to be as clear as possible myself.

Rub your hands thrice across your foreheads--blow your noses---cleanse your emunctories--sneeze, my good people!--God bless you--

Now give me all the help you can.

(IX, xx, 624)

Behind these directions is an assumption that writing is not a solipsistic activity involving only the narrator, but is, rather, an open-ended affair in which the reader takes part. The "mist which hangs upon these . . . pages" has not appeared solely as a result of Tristram's writing but also because of the reader's too intent focus on the immediate narrative. If the mist is to be cleared up, not only has Tristram to begin again, but so also must the reader. Our thinking must be interrupted and our attention directed elsewhere for a moment. The mundane activities Tristram suggests serve the purpose, for while they may not literally be carried out, their enumeration breaks up the narrative line; at the same time such an enumeration is a continuous part of the book since it focuses directly on a reader whose presence is a necessary element of Tristram's writings. The domestic-type relationships of the Shandy family are extended to a concrete reader--a reader who is so situated that he may blow his nose and rub his eyes.

Tristram is interested in his readers in the same way he is interested in his own characters; that is, as physical presences who carry on everyday activities in a concrete world. Tristram envisions us, when we are not at Shandy Hall, in our own domestic capacities and dimensions. At the beginning of Volume VIII Tristram addresses the reader as if he were stepping out of his own door:

--Bonjour!--good morrow!--so you have got your cloak on betimes!--but 'tis a cold morning, and you judge the matter rightly--'tis better to be well mounted, than go o'foot--and obstructions in the glands are dangerous--And how goes it with thy concubine--thy wife--and thy little ones o'both sides?--and when did you hear from the old gentleman and lady--your sister, aunt, uncle and cousins--I hope they have got better of their colds, coughs, claps, toothaches, fevers, stranguries, sciaticas, swellings, and sore eyes.--What a devil of an apothecary! to take so much blood. . . .

(VIII, iii, 541)

Not only is the reader given a physical presence but a family context and a set of family misfortunes. The reader is recognized as having his own background, his own troubles, his own aunt Dinah and uncle Toby, and his own Dr. Slop. Though the particulars may differ, both reader and narrator share a domestic identity. It rests with Tristram to bring this world of domestic relations and domestic trivia into the reader's direct consciousness.

Though there are moments, like the one above, when this is done by giving us a history, most of the time our presence in the world of domestic relations and domestic trivia is achieved by precise descriptions of the domestic

or local material within Tristram's own world. Moments of anger, irritation or good humour are translated into gestures which Tristram observes exactly--the snap of his father's pipe, an exclamation carefully moderated, or a hand laid on his uncle Toby's shoulder. Despite their eccentric nature, a function, by the way, of the oddity of the natures of both Tristram and his family, these moments are typical of the day-to-day living of the characters. So that in addition to being amused by them, the reader is brought into the most private and yet most ordinary of moments and shown responses both intimate and characteristic.

The reader's progress through the book can be measured by the increasing weight he himself gives to domestic and trivial matters. The innocent comments of Uncle Toby come to reflect the whole history of his military campaigns, his wound and obsession:

'Tis a pity, cried my father one winter's night, after a three hours painful translation of Slawkenbergius,-- 'tis a pity, cried my father putting my mother's thread-paper into the book for a mark, as he spoke--that truth, brother Toby, should shut herself up in such impregnable fastnesses, and be so obstinate as not to surrender herself, sometimes upon the closest siege.

(III, xli, 238)

We do not need Tristram's subsequent comments to tell us that uncle Toby will, at the sound of the word "siege", attend to Walter's soliloquy on truth; nor that it is only that word which has caught his attention; nor that

when uncle Toby interrupts Walter's discourse--"truth can only be on one side, brother Toby, considering what ingenuity these learned men have all shown in their solutions of noses."--to remark "can noses be dissolved?" Tristram's father will be angry. Simple as his first gesture is--"My father thrust back his chair"--it holds within it all the irritation of his being duped for the hundredth time into thinking that Uncle Toby was actually interested in the discussion. Similarly, uncle Toby's whistling comes to signify to the reader a whole complex inner reaction involving Toby's present discomfort, his wound, his humanity, aunt Dinah's elopement, and the widow Wadman's affair. His characteristic gesture towards his brother--laying his hand on Walter's knee--represents in the reader's mind a constant affection which transcends the particular moment in which that gesture is being used. Small domestic trivia--the unoiled hinge, the Arabian horse and her ~~male~~ offspring, the bar sinister on the arms of the family coach and the impotent bull, momentary, though continual irritations to the household, are entangled in our minds with the series of small misfortunes which have made Tristram the strange figure he is and which become, through these associations, an illustration of the impotence of the family. That the trivia of a man's life ~~are~~ important in revealing both his interior state and his exterior circumstances is discovered as the

narrative progresses and gestures and objects are piled onto gesture and object to construct a complete family world. And Tristram, who has brought these minutiae into the reader's direct consciousness, uses our growing interest in them to tease us.

As the sole master of his subject, Tristram justifies his own method of narration, and writes the twenty-fifth chapter of Volume IX before the eighteenth and nineteenth declaring that this "may be a lesson to the world, 'to let people tell their stories their own way'" (IX, xxv, 632). And he reminds us from this position that

It is in vain to leave this [matter] to the Reader's imagination:--to form any kind of hypothesis that will render these propositions feasible, he must cudgel his brain sore,--and to do it without,--he must have such brains as no reader ever had before him.--Why should I put them either to tryal or to torture? 'Tis my own affair! I'll explain it myself.

(V, xviii, 377)

The question of Tristram's place in his work is here raised and answered. It is his view of the matter at hand, his own circumcision, which the reader will receive. Even should Tristram wish to absent himself and change the scene completely--"Let us leave, if possible, myself" --the central position in which he is, enjoyed in the quotation above, prevents him--"But 'tis impossible,--I must go along with you to the end of the work" (VI, xx 442). It is his own identity, his own position within the family he is describing, which the

writer is exploring.

It is Tristram's way of explaining matters which still concern him that the interested reader accepts. From this position of advantage Tristram can carry on a verbal-warfare with ^{the} reader, turning elaborately prepared statements upside down:

--All you need say of Fontainbleau (in case you are ask'd) is, that it stands about forty miles (south something) from Paris, in the middle of a large forest-- That there is something great in it-- That the king goes there once, every two or three years, with his whole court, for the pleasure of the chase-- and that during the carnival of sporting, any English gentleman of fashion (you need not forget yourself) may be accommodated with a nag or two, to partake of the sport, taking care only not to out-gallop the king--

Though there are two reasons why you need not talk loud of this to every one.

First, Because 'twill make the said nags the harder to be got; and

Secondly, 'Tis not a word of it true.

(VII, xxvii, 511-512)

The tricks Tristram plays on us, the digressions, the word plays, are similar to the verbal confrontations carried on in the Shandy household. The reader's normal definitions of words are constantly in jeopardy; he, like Tristram's father, is always being made to face a distorted or, at least, a refracted reality. So Tristram's narrative style is continuous with the Shandy style, and allows him to create almost as familiar a relationship with ^{the} reader as exists between his father and uncle Toby.

The conversation with the reader is not conducted across some large unspecified distance, but within a

setting appropriate to conversations. This setting is the domestic scene; it is where Tristram is, at the moment in question, at home. In Chapter IV of the first volume Tristram states: "'tis wrote [the remaining part of the chapter] only for the curious and inquisitive.

_____ Shut the door _____"

Thus we the curious and inquisitive, are in the same room with the door closed. Here we are able to watch Tristram sitting, "in a purple jerkin and yellow pair of slippers, without either wig or cap on" (IX, i, 600), among his writing paraphernalia--his pen, his ink-splattered paper, his books, his desk and his fire. Among these soon familiar objects we come to enjoy Tristram's verbal agility. Indeed we, like Madam, contribute to Tristram's general confusion:

Pray reach me my fool's cap--I fear you sit upon it, Madam--'tis under the cushion--I'll put it on--

Bless me! you have had it upon your head this half-hour.

(VII, xxvi, 511)

We have not interrupted Tristram's thoughts as madam has by sitting on his jester's hat, but by pursuing a light-hearted subject too intently.

Once the reader is present in the study, the narrator can demonstrate, by describing changes in his own physical manner, the shifts of mood and memory that the narrator undergoes as he wrestles with his disparate family material. From the cushion beside Tristram's

chair, we watch the physical manifestations of Tristram's emotional responses to his father's apprehensions and misfortunes:

From the first moment I sat down to write my life for the amusement of the world, and my opinions for its instruction, has a cloud insensibly been gathering over my father. -- A tide of little evils and distresses has been setting in against him. . . .

I enter upon this part of my story in the most pensive and melancholy frame of mind, that ever sympathetic breast was touched with. --My nerves relax as I tell it, ---Every line I write, I feel an abatement of the quickness of my pulse, and of that careless alacrity with it, which every day of my life prompts me to say and write a thousand things I should not.-- And this moment that I last dipp'd my pen into my ink, I could not help taking notice what a cautious air of sad composure and solemnity there appear'd in my manner of doing it--Lord! how different from the rash jerks, and hare-brain'd squirts thou art wont, Tristram,! to transact it with in other humours,--dropping thy pen,--spurting thy ink about thy table and thy books,-- as if thy pen and thy ink, thy books and thy furniture cost thee nothing.

(III, xxviii, 215)

The density of the family history overtakes Tristram.

His narration and our reading are interrupted and dominated by the past which sounds in our ears even as we focus on the man in front of us. Tristram begins to address the reader.---"True philosophy---" but the past invades the reader-narrator space Tristram is creating:

. . . but there is no treating the subject while my uncle is whistling Lillabullero. --Let us go into the house.

(IX, xvii, 620)

The fact that Tristram, in our presence, is continually facing problems raised by his wayward past involves us in both problems and past. Domestic intimacy

is essential if a full account of the narrator's life is to be realized. Tristram's handling of the family material and Tristram's existence within the family consciousness are part of his life and can only be assimilated if the reader has to face him in his emotional shifts, and has to share with him the invasions which his domestic narrative makes on his description of his life and opinions.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹All quotations from the text refer to James Work's edition of The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.

²Instances of such direction are to be found in I, xxii, 72; VI, xi, 473-474; VII, xliii, 538; VIII, vii, 545, of Sterne's Tristram Shandy.

³Work, "Introduction", Tristram Shandy, xlvii-xlix.

⁴Ibid., xlix.

⁵Ibid., xxxvi.

⁶Ibid., xlix.

⁷Anderson, "Associationalism and Wit in Tristram Shandy," Philological Quarterly, xlviii, 29-31.

⁸Anderson, 33.

⁹Some examples of the shifts in narrative caused by Tristram's characters are to be found in III, i, 157; IV, xli, 239, and IV, x, 281 of Tristram Shandy.

¹⁰Booth, Rhetoric of Fiction, 234.

¹¹Ibid., 223.

¹²Ibid., 232.

¹³Ibid., 332.

¹⁴Ibid., 232.

¹⁵Ibid., 222.

¹⁶Ibid., 233.

¹⁷Ibid., 229.

¹⁸Ibid., 222.

¹⁹McKillop, "Laurence Sterne", Laurence Sterne, ed. John Traugott, 45.

²⁰Ibid., 43.

²¹Ibid., 58.

²²Ibid., 44.

²³Ibid., 45.

²⁴Ibid., 57.

²⁵Ibid., 57.

²⁶Jean-Jacques Mayoux, "Laurence Sterne", Laurence Sterne, 114.

²⁷McKillop, 54.

²⁸Ibid., 38.

²⁹Ibid., 39.

³⁰Ibid., 38.

³¹R. D. Laing in Politics of the Family, p. 24, explores the contradiction between the family and the external world:

Under usual circumstances, inside/outside is one of the distinctions which, combined together with other distinctions by rules of an experimental syntax, seem to help towards giving us a sense that our experience makes sense. It belongs to the familial-social order, not to the natural order.

CHAPTER II

¹Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880, 1-16.

²Ibid., 17.

³Ibid., 28.

⁴Laslett, The World We Have Lost, 38.

⁵Perkin, 19-23. Mingay, English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century, 4-15. Laslett, 55-65.

⁶Perkin, 42.

⁷Ibid., 37, 42.

⁸Ibid., 38-42.

⁹Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁰Ibid., 41-42.

¹¹Mingay, 131-162.

¹²Perkin, 25-33.

CHAPTER III

¹It is interesting to note that it is Yorick, a man of inferior status, who is Toby and Walter's friend, and not those men of equal rank who have gathered for dinner at Didius' house. In The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880, Harold Perkin comments on the structural necessity of such "vertical" friendships:

Hierarchy inhered not so much in the fortuituous juxtaposition of degree above degree, rank upon rank, status over status, as in the permanent vertical links which, rather than the horizontal solidarities of class, bound society together. "Vertical friendship", a durable two-way relationship between patrons and clients permeating the whole of society, was a social nexus peculiar to the old society. . . . For those who lived within its embrace it was so much an integral part of the texture of life that they had no name for it save "friendship". (49)

CHAPTER V

¹Booth, Rhetoric of Fiction, 234.

²Ibid., 238.

³Ibid., 237.

⁴Work, xxviii.

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